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TURCO-WESTERNS: AESTHETIC AND THEMATIC POLITICS OF A TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSLOCAL GENRE

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APPROVAL

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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

İLYAS DENİZ ÇINAR

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06.01.2023

For Rose Rossi and Ronald Hodges Williams…

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TURCO-WESTERNS: AESTHETIC AND THEMATIC POLITICS OF A TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSLOCAL GENRE

ABSTRACT

What can one interpret about life in the Turkish frontier, ethnic identity, and Turkey-U.S. relationships from Westerns made in Turkey? How did the cinematography and iconography of the Western genre translate into Turkey? How does a national cinema industry adapt an iconic film genre, and what transnational flows enabled the syncretization of the Western genre into the Turkish silver screen? Examining the history of cinema in Turkey with a focus on films produced between 1959 and 1975, when there was a noticeable Western genre film production in Turkey, I explore the Turkish Western subgenre in this period and catalog them under a new parameter: *Turco-Westerns*. With my coining of Turco-Westerns, I imply that these Westerns are not Turkish but rather *Turkey-ish*: carrying all the ethics, politics, and aesthetics that come from being related to Turkey as a land carrying various types of subjectivities. My thesis explores these questions, alongside the Turco-Western canon, by exploring the aesthetic and thematic politics of *Düşman Yolları Kesti* (*Enemy Has Cut Off All the Roads*; dir. Osman F. Seden, 1959)*, Çifte Tabancalı Damat* (*Dual-wielding Groom*; dir. Nuri Ergün, 1967), and *Aç Kurtlar* (*The Hungry Wolves*; dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1969) as case studies. Through this study, I negotiate the political and aesthetic motives of the Turco-Westerns that *translocalized* the Western genre to Turkey. By approaching Turco-Westerns through the critical perspective of *translocalization*, I am highlighting and negotiating how Turkish filmmakers integrated the elements of the Wild West into Asia Minor (also known as Anatolia) which formed the setting of their movies or rendered the filmic conventions of the Western and myths of the Wild West with characters and cultural references about Turkey.

Keywords: Western, Turkey, Film Studies, National Cinema, Translocal, Transnational

TÜRKO-WESTERNLER: ULUSLARÖTESI VE MEKANÖTESI BIR FILM TÜRÜNÜN ESTETIK VE TEMATIK POLITIKALARI

ÖZET

Türkiye hudutlarındaki yaşam, etnik kimlik ve Türkiye-A.B.D. ilişkisi hakkında bir film türü ne gibi yorumlarda bulunabilir? Western türünün sinematografisi ve ikonografisi Türkiye'ye nasıl yansımıştır? Bir ulusal sinema endüstrisi ikonik bir film türünü hangi ulusötesi akışlar aracılığıyla uyarladı ve Western türünün Türkiye beyazperdesine uyumunu sağladı? Bu çalışmada Türkiye sinema tarihini 1959-1975 yılları arasında üretilen Western türü filmlere odaklanarak inceleyerek *Türko-Western* adlı yeni bir parametre altında katalogluyorum. Türko-Western terimi ile bu Westernlerin Türk değil, Türkiyemsi olduğunun altını çizerek çeşitli öznellikler taşıyan bir ülke olarak Türkiye ile ilişkili olmanın getirdiği tüm etik, siyasi ve estetik unsurları taşıdıklarını vurguluyorum. Tezim, Türko-Western filmlerinin genel külliyatına atıfta bulunup *Düşman Yolları Kesti* (Osman F. Seden, 1959), *Çifte Tabancalı Damat* (Nuri Ergün, 1967) ve *Aç Kurtlar* (Yılmaz Güney, 1969) gibi filmlere odaklanarak Western türünü Türkiye'ye taşıyan ve benim mekanötesi bir çerçevede yorumladığım Türko-Western filmlerinin politik ve estetik duruşlarını inceliyor. Bu çalışmada eleştirisel bir bakış açısı ile Türk film yapımcılarının Avrasya ya da Anadolu olarak bilinen coğrafyaya nasıl mitleşmiş Vahşi Batı unsurlarını yansıttığını ya da Western türünü, bu türün unsurlarını, ve Vahşi Batı mitlerini nasıl Türkiye coğrafyasından çıkan kültürel referanslar ve karakterler ile harmanlayıp yansıttıklarının tartışıyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Western, Türkiye, Film Çalışmaları, Ulusal Sinema, Mekanötesilik, Ulusötesilik.

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LIST OF ACRONMYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASALA: Ermenistan'ın Kurtuluşu için Ermeni Gizli Ordusu (English: Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia).

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (English: Republican People's Party).

CKMP: Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Partisi (English: Republican Rural Party).

GP: Güven Partisi (English: Trust Party).

MHP: Milli Hareket Partisi (English: Nationalist Movement Party).

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

PKK: Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê; English: Kurdish Labor Party).

TİP: Türkiye İşçi Partisi (English: Turkish Labor Party).

TRT: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

U.S.S.R: The United Socialist Soviet Republic

U.S.: The United States of America

WWI: The First World War.

WWII: The Second World War.

1. INTRODUCTION

Westerns are historical fiction of settlers, ranchers, gunslingers, cowboys, provincial martial men, Native Americans, and criminals set in the nineteenth-century frontiers—the sparsely-populated but-developing settlements towards the West and Southwest of North America. A period of imperialism and acquisition of great wealth through expansion, nineteenth-century American and Mexican frontiers were an excellent source for the fictionalization of U.S. history to create new narratives for the nineteenth-century literary and twentieth-century film industry. Carrying the characteristics of its founding myth, *the myth of the frontier*, Western presents an ethos profoundly engrained in the U.S. culture and modernization project. While the Western genre enjoyed great interest from audiences between the late 1920s and mid-1970s, some argue that it lost its popularity after this point.[1] Yet, the genre curiously continues to enjoy a renewed life both in the United States of America and globally.

Discussing Westerns comes with a defined set of iconographies: a clear-cut set of conventions that scholars, critics, and audiences utilize to recognize and name these texts as the phenomenon known as *genre* conveniently. Examples include character's hats, frequent use of revolvers and gun fights, extreme-long shots, saloon and ranch settings, and the common appearance of horses. But what happens exactly when this genre, which is codified and associated so profoundly with the U.S. as an iconographic, ideological, geographical, political, and cultural *space*[2], is exercised to make films by other countries and regions? Is this transnational flow a simple adaptation process that uses the allure and popularity of the genre for financial purposes, or can we argue that there is something more to it? Is the Western genre "the American film genre *par excellence*" in words of Andre Bazin; a genre that is aligned so much with a U.S. form of "national word view" that "has special meaning for Americans" from a standpoint of identity formation (qtd in. Jim Kitses 1969, 12). In other words, is this genre a national exception for Americans, or

[1] See sections 1.5. and 1.6. for counter-arguments to this claim.
[2] With the space, I am referring to both a geographical marker that differentiates one place from another as well as a phenemenonlogical one that constitutes what that place is.

can it be deployed to address more universal concerns? In this thesis, I move out from these broad questions to investigate the less-studied Western genre in the history of cinema in Turkey and propose other questions to understand what sorts of insights a Near-Eastern syncretization of an iconic film genre can yield: *What can we interpret about life in the Turkish frontier, ethnic identity, and Turkey-U.S. relationships from Westerns made in Turkey? How did the cinematography and filmmaking of the Western genre translate into Turkey? How does a national cinema industry adapt an iconic film genre, and what transnational flows enabled the syncretization of the Western genre into the Turkish silver screen?*

Examining the history of cinema in Turkey with a particular focus on films produced between 1959 and 1975, when there was a noticeable Western genre film production in Turkey with sixty-three films, I explore the Turkish production of this classic genre in this period and catalog them under a new parameter: *Turco-Westerns*. With my coining of Turco-Westerns, I am trying to imply that these Westerns are not Turkish but rather *Turkey-ish*: carrying all the ethics, politics, and aesthetics that come from being related to "Turkey" as a land carrying all sorts of imaginative subjectivities. In other words, instead of belonging to any racial, ethnic, or religious category of identification, they are from the lands discursively and politically configured today as Turkey. Through this study, I negotiate the political and aesthetic motives of the Turco-Westerns that *translocalized* the Western genre to Turkey.

Dorothy Driver (2017) explains that with the "translocal," the "focus is on spatial interactions within and across spaces that reveal, generate, confirm and disturb relations between character and place, saturating spaces with meanings brought into being by different perspectives, discourses, events and behaviour" (9). Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (2010) point out that the concept of translocality, as a theoretical research paradigm, "designates the outcome of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols which span spatial distances and cross boundaries, be they geographical, cultural or political (5). Eric Kit-wai Ma (2002) also utilizes the term to explore how the cultural dynamics and interactivity that take place in bandrooms in Hong Kong enact a "local absorption of spatial practices from faraway sites" (132), while Dietrich Reetz (2010) analyzes how "transnational" Muslim communities in South Asia mix the type of Islam

practiced in their home countries with their new settings to produce translocal new cultural, political, and religious practices (293).

"Daily practices of translocality," as Katherine Brickell and Ayono Datta (2016) note, is not only a phenomenon caused by the movement of people but also includes "mutually constitutive acts of visualizing and imagining connections between places and spaces" (18). In other words, translocality allows for one to "identif[y] with more than one location" (Oakes and Schein 2006, p. xii). Films, as audiovisual material that travel between national boundaries (through foreign releases, adaptations, or generic imitations), similarly allow their audiences to 'identify' with characters and, importantly, space-as-a-filmic-setting through various filmic strategies such as continuity editing, cinematography, performance, narrative strategies, and genre conventions, special effects, and a range of mise-en-scène features (costumes, props, decors). I argue that Westerns, due to how they deploy space as a significant iconographic marker, elevate this affect of translocality more, all the while allowing cultural and political references and generic aesthetics to mix and create new hybridized forms. Put differently, Westerns use space as a key symbol in their stories, which makes the idea of moving from one place to another, and making connections between these locales, more prominent. And with the term translocalization, I am highlighting how Turkish filmmakers were able to disperse elements of the Wild West into Asia Minor (also known as Anatolia), which formed the setting of their movies or rendered the Wild West and the Western conventions with characters and cultural references pertaining to Turkey.

Hervé Mayer and David Roche (2022), in their recent study of global Westerns, offer two groups to classify Westerns that are not produced in the U.S.: "those set in the US-American West and those that take place in locations and periods that resemble the US-American West because of their history, topography, and geology" (12). The films I analyze in the upcoming chapters are global Westerns that fit into both categories. With my employment of the term "translocality," or filmic transposition of space both literally and metaphorically, I am underlining the essential transnational phenomenon of cinema that enabled Westerns made in Turkey to be set in a diegetic American West with local actors, or 'indigenous' Westerns that juxtaposed a space with the Wild West frontier

depicted by Westerns to convey various messages and cinematographic affects (like action, grandeur, thrill, erotics, and such).

Through my filmic and discursive analysis, I posit that rather than simply taking the genre and adapting these films for Turkish audiences for very clear economic purposes—in terms of narrative ease of writing a script or shooting scenes that already have established popular models as well as the outcome of these movies in the local box-office—these films also syncretized the narrative telos and visual universe (in terms of cinematography, iconography, and mise-en-scène) of the Western genre with discourses of belonging to Turkey as a cultural, filmic, ideological, and geopolitical *space*. By sketching out the general meanings and spatial politics of this hybrid sub-genre through the films in the Turco-Western corpus—and closely examining *Düşman Yolları Kesti* (*Enemy Has Cut All the Roads*; *Enemy* from here on, dir. Osman F. Seden, 1959), *Çifte Tabancalı Damat* (*Dual-Wielding Groom*; *Groom* from here on, dir. Nuri Ergün, 1967), *Aç Kurtlar* (*The Hungry Wolves*; *Wolves* from here on, dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1971)—I explore the affective, political, transcultural enunciations that they have created. Overall, this project's aim is not to chronicle Western's historic popularity in Turkey with ethnographic research and reception studies methodology, which are beyond the scope of this study, but, instead, to account for its relevance during a particular era between 1959 and 1975 as a visual form and discourse through methods of formalistic film criticism, historiography and archival research.

What is the point of taking something so distinctly American and applying it to Turkish audiences? Despite their critical success or failure within the confines of my analysis, with the Turco-Westerns analyzed in my corpus, Turkish filmmakers took something very fundamental about the U.S., packaged that into something that is 'legible' to Turkish audiences, built their narratives and visual look around these models, and used this genre to comment on and reflect the society. Yet, I still claim that there are nuances that separate Turco-Westerns from other variations of Westerns. These films are iconographic universes that contain ideologically and politically charged ideas which ultimately create or comment on the discourses about the Turkish modernization project and its foreign relations with the Western world, particularly the U.S. Before moving onto the aim, methodology, where this project is positioned within the literature, and the historical

scope of this thesis, I must first unpack the essential core that Turco-Westerns, like all global Westerns, took from the Western genre: the *myth of the frontier*.

1.1. Frontier Myth: The Ontology of the Western

In film studies literature, Bazin's famous labeling of the Western as the film genre that represents the U.S. the most is generally taken for granted. This linkage often leads to a dismissal of the broader history of the Western when it comes to other fields such as painting, photography, historical fictions, dime novels, or performances (Nicolas Martinez 2021, 82-83; Mayer and Roche 2022, 6). While this disregard is understandable, as films primarily establish a visual universe and a set of performative conventions for any given genre, "[t]he myth of the West and the cultural products that gave it expression had circulated before the invention of cinema and continued to do so during the early years of the medium's development" (Mayer and Roche 2022, 6). In fact, archival works conducted by scholars point to the appeal of Wild West Show and themes involving Western-esque characteristics in the International Exposition of 1867 in Paris that led to the production of Native-American pictures by Pathé in France as well as Westerns produced in Italy between the late 1900s and early 1910s (Emily Burns, 2018; Irene Lottini, 2012; Aliza S. Wong, 2014; Haas, 2022). Scholars like Richard Abel (1999) also claim that silent-era films of French companies like Pathé and Gaumont, which focused on indigenous experiences both in the U.S. and elsewhere, influenced the development of the Western genre. In short, while the U.S. has always been the primary producer of the Western genre regarding production, narrative setting, and dissemination, the genre spawned through transnational exchanges and cross-culturalization in a global world. Western genre, then, did not suddenly become transnational with the advent of the Euro-Western cycle of the 1960s, but it was "transnational from the start" (Mayer and Roche 2022, 6). Yet, this transnational exchange was mobilized by a fundamental myth that is central to all stories taking place within or interacting with the Western genre.

While many debate the roots of Westerns, Lee Clark Mitchell (1996) points to the work of author James Fenimore Cooper for laying the groundwork of the genre with his vivid "celebration of the frontier landscapes, feats of violence, and masculine self-construction"

(8). Mitchell analyzes Cooper's works, such as *The Pioneers* (1823) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and argues that they establish "the model on which all other attempts [of Westerns] will be practiced" (9). In its *classical* iterations, this model generally functions to promulgate the rhetoric of Euro-American (civilized) invasion of the untamed wild and conquest of the land—and subsequently, people—towards the West of the United States. Scholars like Susan Kollin (2015) also agree with this position and argue that it is possible to trace the roots of the Western in captivity stories of European Orientalist tradition, particularly those penned by Cooper.

For Jane Tompkins (1992), Westerns function on colonial discourses and iconography to mythologize the West of the U.S. Celebrating the white, Euro-American male violence, and the conquering of the land and the feminine, Westerns, Tompkins writes, "*answer* the domestic novel" (39) as "a symbol of freedom, and of the opportunity for conquest" (4). Tompkins further adds that Westerns "offer escape from the conditions of life in modern industrial society" as they offer a pseudo-emancipation to the modern individual, in embodied and affective ways, "from a mechanized existence, economic dead ends, social entanglements, unhappy personal relations, political injustice:"

> The desert light and the desert space, the creak of saddle leather and the sun beating down, the horses' energy and force—these things promise a translation of the self into something purer and more authentic, more intense, more real. (4)

Almost all the scholarship on the Western genre agrees that one of the key aspects that form the narratological and affective telos of the Western is *the myth of the frontier*. Established by Fredrick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) in his essay penned originally in 1893 called "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (2008), the frontier is "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (9). In his essay, Turner argues that the notion of the frontier played a foundational role in establishing the American polity, identity, and culture (9-10). According to Mayer and Roche (2022), frontiers had ontological purposes from the standpoint of historiography as well:

> Following Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis of 1893, the historiography of the US-American West presented the history of US-American settler colonialism as the genesis of the US-American nation. Turner and his followers (Webb; Billington) identified in the metaphor of the frontier the singular, exceptional dynamics that spawned the most powerful, productive, and democratic nation. (3)

Turner ultimately argues that the frontier works as a buffer zone between the civilized Eastern seaboard of the U.S. and the rich expanses of nature, wilderness, and resources located in the West of the country. In other words, the American frontier was essentially the edge of the U.S. civilization that kept its borders intact by defending it from all the forces of nature or those that fell outside the parameters of what is normatively regarded as civilized. The frontier also offered promises to its consumers (whether physically or in a metaphorical sense through literature or film) by allowing contact with *nature* just beyond the imaginary settings of the national lines. Therefore, frontiers are liminal spaces that allow transience between tangible and intangible, factual or fictional, and self and the other.

According to Victor Turner (1969), liminality is a temporal and spatial regime of "in-betweenness" in which any type of stable or recurrent conditions are culturally recognized while subjects are on the verge of personal or social change through some form of ritual (127). Here, I take the concept of ritual more broadly as a cultural/colonial event and superimpose it to the notion of the frontier to ultimately mark its ephemeral quality both in terms of geography (i.e., how it separates nature from civilization and can be located practically anywhere) and phenomenology (how it is a transient philosophical place between a space/place and a space/non-place). Fredrick Jackson Turner also believed that the frontiers had functions that changed the performance of Americanness as they transformed settlers into "rugged individuals" who cherished the ethos of freedom and individualism—making it align even more with the (Victor) Turnerian concept of ritual and liminality. Affirming my point, Richard Slotkin (1973), the premier cultural historian on the topic, comprehensively defines the frontier as "America as a wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual to thrust his way to the top" (5). Here, Slotkin not only defines what frontier is but also denotes how much it has affected the performance of selfhood for the American individual.

After Fredrick Jackson Turner, Henry Nash Smith's conceptualization of the American West plays a vital role in the Western film genre literature.[3] For Smith ([1950] 1973), the American West was framed discursively by the media (newspapers), travel literature, and

[3] Henry Nash Smith is also one of the co-founders of American Studies as a discipline.

politicians, at first, as an endless Edenic "garden" for agrarian people to land and farm and utilize the land's riches (174). However, Smith identifies that, after a certain point during the Westward Expansion, this discourse started to change, as the commons and the media of the time began referring to the West as a "desert" (175). This discursive shift reflected the topographies discovered by both the post-American Civil War (1861-1865) venturers and the recirculation of previous expeditions to this vast region that took place before in the early parts of 19th-century (175-176). As such, the West was coded in the American cultural and societal memory both as a "garden" that presented many opportunities alongside its opposite connotation, the wild "desert," for the "uncivilized" (Smith 1973, 176).

While this is the core of what Westerns were built upon—Euro-American settler colonialism that imbued the settler subjects of the frontier with a sense of personal exceptionalism and ruggedness towards nature/space and its indigenous inhabitants—it has also been utilized as a historiographical discourse to set the U.S. apart from the colonial and imperial powers of the era. Agreeing with this view, Stephanie LeMenager marks how the U.S. frontier "functioned to separate the USA from global imperial history, marking it as an exceptional national experiment" (LeMenager 2011, 515-516). Janne Lahti also interprets this historiography as an institutionalization of "exceptionalism that has traditionally shaped much of American historical thinking" (qtd. in Mayer and Roche 2022, 3). While the case could be made that the exceptionalist formation of this performance of national identity through a filmic genre was something unique to Westerns and the U.S., non-American filmmakers have also employed the genre to bolster the performance of national belonging or critique it (Austin Fisher, 2011). Two of the case studies in my corpus, *Enemy* and *Wolves*, also fit into that category. In the former, the creatives behind the film adapt the Western genre conventions and narratives to invigorate the founding myths of the Turkish Republic by placing this Western narrative within the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922; see Chapter 3). In the latter, Yılmaz Güney, a prominent political filmmaker and star, uses Western genre elements to address ethnic and political injustices in Turkey (as discussed in Chapter 5).

I regard *Wolves* as a precursor of liberally progressive contemporary Westerns that started with Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992). Since the 1980s, a new generation of historians

have approached the mythical West of the frontier as a culturally and ethnically diverse and hybrid place (Mayer and Roche 2022, 3). Historians such as Richard Slotkin (1992) and Denise Mary MacNeil (2009) returned the focus to the myth of the frontier and underlined the importance of Native Americans in the establishment of the myth of the frontier. Susan Kollin (2001), in her writings on Cormac McCarthy, encouraged scholars to trace the "sensibilities" within the Western genre that "have been shaped by a larger history of imperialism." (568). Kollin follows this premise with her 2015 work, *Captivating Westerns*, as she studies the juxtaposition of the Middle East, its cultures, peoples, and politics, with the American West. Perin Gürel, in her crucial 2017 work *The Limits of Westernization: A Cultural History of America in Turkey*, also observes how the frontier myth and the U.S.-led globalization have found ramifications in another Middle Eastern country, Turkey. Finally, Emily Burns, in her work *Transnational Frontiers: The American West in France*, studies the frontier myth and its ideological consequences in France, exploring how a similar European settler mentality influenced by the frontier myth impacted the French colonizing practices masqueraded as "civilization mission" in mainland French society and its overseas colonies (Burns, 2018).

The studies listed here are ultimately helpful for explaining the concept of Western and frontier beyond film that goes back to literature, dime-novels, and spectacles that took place in fairs or similar events. They are also valuable for my purposes in this thesis to approach Turco-Western from a critical standpoint of ethnic diversity and unearthing how filmmakers created diegetic worlds within this genre that commented on this topic (see Chapter 5). Additionally, the works here lay the foundations of how the frontier, as an imaginative space, can function on a transnationally discursive level in which authors, directors, creatives, and even the general public can translocalize elements from their own culture unto or draw inferences from the frontier to negotiate the political and sociocultural reality of their own locales. While this survey was necessary to point to the already-transnational nature of the Western, the focus of this thesis is strictly on film Western. Film Western, if anything, is a prime example of the mythic frontier ideology turned into a corpus of films that share similar characters, concerns, themes, mise-en-scène, props, settings, and so forth. Offering the genealogy of how this genre was

discursively formulated and categorized is crucial for me to analyze a cycle in this story: Turco-Westerns.

1.2. Filmic Genre Theory, the Western, and Transnationalism

Film genre theorist Barry Keith Grant (2012) succinctly defines genre movies as "commercial feature films that, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations" (XVII). Grant goes on to emphasize the importance of genre in film viewing, asserting that "genre movies have made up the bulk of film practice…[and] have been exceptionally significant […] in establishing the popular sense of cinema as a cultural and economic institution" (XVII). The word itself, genre, in our current day understanding of it in the film industry, refers to three different notions: (1) a distinct mode of film production often paralleled with studio systems of Hollywood; (2) a signifier-index of pleasure and anticipation expected from the film for audiences; (3) and a codification of popular cinema and an understanding of popular culture as critical concepts (Grant 2007, 2). Tom Ryall (1998) also defines the term genre in three categories. Ryall argues that genre can be first understood as a "generic system," which is the connection between particular genres and the broader convention of their respective studio systems (329). The second definition Ryall puts forth is "individual genres," the understanding of particular genres and their elements. Thirdly, Ryall argues that scholars and critics should evaluate each film within a genre as an individual work, rather than considering them as a group. Thusly, he makes a timely call for reading particular movies within the broader conventions of their respective genre contexts and how much they change the direction of the genre simply with their presence (329).

In another study, Grant (2007) distinguishes genre films from other sorts of films by heralding them as "popular cinema" par excellence "as opposed to art cinema and experimental cinema" and the often-forgotten documentary cinema (1). However, Grant quickly deconstrues his own statement, asserting that the distinction between popular genre cinema of big national industries (Hollywood, Bollywood, etc.) is not "so clear" (1). Later, he adds that "[t]he films of such important yet diverse art cinema directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder are [also] infused with elements of genre" (1) In fact, David Bordwell (1979) so convincingly argues that

"art cinema" could very well be considered a genre in its own right (62). However, Bordwell's arguments come from an essentializing place of auteurism that sees film production as the work of a single author-director figure. In reality, many of the "European masters" of auteur cinema have been influenced by popular American genres or at least made their films vis-à-vis the transnational flow of cinema, which included Hollywood as its big Other. Grant (2007) so tellingly summarizes this by pointing out that:

> Popular cinema is organised almost entirely according to genre categories science fiction, horror, thriller, pornography, romantic comedy, and so forth. From the particulars of film advertising in the various mass media to television broadcast schedules to the organisation of tapes and DVDs at the local video rental outlet, the idea of genre informs every aspect of popular cinema from production to consumption. (1-2)

Robin Wood ([1978] 2012) argues that genre, as a structuring body that gives films their meaning, has been taken for granted as an *a priori* construct, and the "ideologies" that give rise to the discursive field of genre has not been adequately scrutinized by the early genre criticism of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. According to Wood, genres are founded upon "ideological contradictions" which help with their sustenance and mass popularity (80-81). Agreeing with Wood, Barbara Klinger (2012) points that the issue of ideology in genre criticism has been marred by "auteurist considerations" (94). I argue that these "auteurist considerations" often saw films and their ideological totality as a work of a singular figure: the director. Yet a film is a final reflection of its production process, often involving a bevy of collaborators, participants, and prior texts. Filmmaking is a collaborative process that involves many key contributors, from the texts and films that influence its narrative and visuals, to the best boy and sound and lighting crew, all of whom play a crucial role in shaping the ideology conveyed by the film. Rick Altman (1984), with his seminal essay "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," proves vital for my purposes of challenging these "auteurist considerations" by offering a critical survey of genre theory and mapping both the contours and confluences of the theoretical framework which I will position Westerns as a filmic genre and oeuvre.

Surveying the history of genre criticism in film studies, Altman believes that young cinephiles of the *Cahiers* group (including Bazin) were inattentive to the question of the genre as their focus was the aesthetic and narrative styles of seminal directors like John Ford or Alfred Hitchcock (9). Altman claims that *Cahiers* group looked at genres as "the generalized, identifiable structures through which Hollywood's rhetoric flows" (9). Altman scrutinizes these critics, reasoning that "they were unable to perceive the important role of genres in exercising influence on the interpretive community" (8), and writes that, shortly thereafter, a structuralist intervention brought another set of discursive division to genre analysis. Several scholars influenced by the structuralist school of critical theory have historically approached film genre criticism with a semantic approach, stressing its morphemic units such as attitudes, characters, shots used, mise-en-scène, etc. Influenced by the linguistic turn in humanities, Vladimir Propp and Tzvetan Todorov's narratological analyses on character and plot[4], and Claude Levi-Strauss' structural analysis of "myths,"[5] the structuralist school genre scholars approached the widespread role of the genre as an "interpretive community" (8). These scholars—exemplified by thinkers like Will Wright, Thomas Schatz, John Cawelti, Jim Kitses, Leo Baudry, and others—followed in Levi-Strauss' footsteps and located genre as a ritualistic practice over its audience as a "myth" (9).

Jim Kitses was the first scholar to employ the juxtaposition of narrative lexical structures and the relationships that links them to study film genres. The specific genre he chose to analyze was the Western and he conducted this study through a syntagmatic approach—studying the genre with a dialectical and paradigmatic methodology. Building upon Henry Nash Smith's (1950) work, Kitses argues that "the western grows out of a dialectic between the West as Garden and as Desert (between culture and nature, community and individual, future and past)" (qtd. in Altman 10). Kitses asserted that Westerns are formed by sets of antinomies that put civilization against nature. After Kitses' influential work,

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[4] See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of Folktale*. University of Texas Press, 1968; *Theory and History of Folklore*. University of Minessota Press, 1984; Tzvetan Todorov, *Théorie de la littérature: Textes des formalistes russes*. Paris: Ed. de Seuil, 1966.

[5] According to Claude Levi Strauss "a myth is both 'historically specific" in that it happened a long time ago, and "'ahistorical'" as it represents a story that cannot be temporally contained, i.e. timeless. Language and structuralist theory is both capable of explaining myths but also they require a new, "a third level," to define myths. For more, see Claude Lévi-Strauss. "The Structural Study of Myth." *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955): 428–44.

the canon of the Western film became a classical case study to unpack the discursive phenomenon known as genre in film studies. Will Wright (1977), for instance, utilizes Straussian structuralism as his main methodology to look at the connection between Westerns and U.S. cultural institutions and social behavior. Wright's purpose is to demonstrate that Westerns work as myths for their respective American culture, and, in this effort, he analyzes the major plots from popular movies and separates them into four categories: (1) the classical plot that revolves around an individual hero that spanned from the 1930s to 1950s; (2) the vengeance story of the individual hero which became popular after 1950s; (3) the transition period which saw new takes on the first to types after 1960s as Hollywood transitioned into a new era; (4) and the professional story of "abject(s)," which means, in Julia Kristeva's (1982) seminal coining, the breakdown of subject/object differentiation, with the revisionist Westerns of the 1970s.

I also find it important to bring critique to these structuralist approaches, as they draw from the genre's signature iconography, material semantics, and Smith's foundational "garden" and "desert" dichotomy to ultimately reduce the dialectics of genre into binary and insular understandings. Conjoining these two views with considerable post-structuralist influence, Altman (1984) proposes to study genre in "a semantic/syntactic" manner. He notes that both levels of signification work simultaneously in a *genre film*, such as Western, and argues that a genre emerges when "either a relatively stable set of semantic givens is developed through syntactic experimentation into a coherent and durable syntax, or an already existing syntax adopts a new set of semantics" (12).

The latter half of this statement by Altman, "an already existing syntax adopts a new set of semantics," also reflects my understanding of what a film genre is and how I employ it in this thesis. Overall, genres are one of the most crucial structuring elements of film viewing in how they help viewers define what they see by providing them with an iconic grammatical structure to follow. Heather Dubrow ([1982] 2014) argues that genre serves as an interpretive medium between audiences (readers, viewers, spectators, fans, etc.) and texts (novels, poems, films, series, and such) and substantially shape the interaction between audiences and texts. In other words, it is possible to regard genres as composite filmic schemas that active cognitive flows in audiences to identify the film that they are

viewing (in terms of filmic events and characters), interpret the surface level or subtextual signification of the film that is playing right before their eyes, and negotiate their own viewerly and social position vis-à-vis what they are watching. In the words of John Frow (2015), "genre is not a *property* of text but is a function of reading" (111; italics in original) that allows audiences (including artists, critics, scholars, and filmmakers) to decode and reflect on any form of creative work. The scope and contours of the genre expand alongside these reflections leading to a hybrid form.

Hybridity, in genre theory, refers to how much genres borrow from each other and how they blur the lines between genre categories to create a new, updated version of films that possess elements from different genres. Structuralist theories come in handy at this juncture to understand each genre as a language. Hybrid genres, then, are a mixing of film genres that offer filmic articulations that speak to multiple genre conventions codes. Hybridizing genres has been a longstanding tradition in creative fiction, figures like Bashō, Dante, William Blake, Dostoevsky, and many other practiced in this mold in literary fiction which eventually influenced audiovisual mediums like film and television (Lawrence Sutin 2013, 21-22). To exemplify, FOX's short-lived series *Firefly* (2002-2003) famously combines elements from Westerns and Sci-Fi. Another example of this hybridization is the *Star Wars* series: a storyworld franchise that consists of nine film entries, cartoons, spin-off TV series, novels, novellas, comics, and video games all build the "universe" of a narrative diegesis. Recently, this diegetic universe has turned into its Western roots in its continued existence as one of the world's most popular IPs (intellectual properties). The popular and critical acclaim of *The Mandolorian* (2019-) and *The Book of Boba Fett* (2021-) series on Disney+, which does not shy away from its Western ontology with its characters, mise-en-scène, and soundtrack, is continuing the *Star Wars* universe and its central Western town, Tatooine, while disseminating Western in the mainstream.[6]

[6] Other examples, such as AMC's *The Walking Dead* series (2010-ongoing), an example of post-apocalyptic horror genre, also borrows from Westerns heavily by the characterization of its main character, Rick Grimes, a police officer wearing a sherrif's hat and wielding a revolver, and its audiovisual representation was born out of comic books just like Westerns were born out of dime-novels and later comics. Of course, I must mention that an example like *Star Wars* or *The Walking Dead* does not only draw

Most of these conceptualizations of genre understand it strictly in a monolithic sense within the larger national industries that they are a part of—the biggest being the Hollywood and the United States film industry. Later genre studies by scholars like Thomas Schatz, Edward Buscombe, Christopher Frayling, and Michael Coyne that follow in the footsteps of structuralist film criticism all concentrated on the genre's intimate connection with the formation of U.S. national identity (Mayer and Roche 2022, 4). Mayer and Roche (2022) maintain that these works displayed a single-minded approach when it came to tying Hollywood genres with practices of nationalism in the U.S., writing: "[t]hey approached the Western as a US-American exception, a genre intimately tied to US history and bent to explore the formation of a US-American brand of democracy and capitalism. In doing so, these seminal studies participated in fueling a sense of national exception that the genre was originally designed to promote" (4).

However, filmmakers of 'classic' Westerns have not all harmoniously pursued such an agenda. Communicating this opinion way earlier, Tag Gallagher ([1986] 2012) reveals the critical pitfalls of evolutionist frameworks when it came to interpreting the genealogy of the Western genre as if the classical iterations of the genre before the 1950s pursued more conservative displays while, through the revisionist interventions, the genre became more "self-conscious" (300). Commenting on this evolutionary framing of how the Western genre developed, Lee Broughton (2016) notes how scholars limited their focus to Westerns coming out of Hollywood, technical and economic changes taking place in the American film industry, and the larger sociopolitical phenomena in the U.S. society; thus, neglecting Westerns produced in international (to the U.S.) settings (1). With this thesis, I am pointing to one of such non-U.S. and non-Western/European cinema industries by exploring Western genre productions in Turkish cinema.

from Westerns, but also from samurai movies of Akira Kurosawa, and various examples of survival horror film sub-genre such as "zombie movies." This shows just how malleable and flexible genre boundaries are to begin with—creating hybrid narratives, diegetic universes, and, most importantly, filmic representations that are made up of the combination of various genre elements.

A more nuanced way to understand genre, not just its contemporary position but its total historical condition, then, is to understand genre in terms of cyclical patterns that repeat themselves in transnational ways. In that effort, two approaches to film genre criticism and the way they approach the collective body of a genre prove extremely useful. Works by Amanda Ann Klein (2011) and Richard Nowell (2011) show how crucial the concept of "cycle" is for all kinds of film historians, as it is vital to explain how certain eras and "cycles" that they create influence the direction of any particular genre. Klein (2011) particularly notes how a "cycle studies" approach to study film genres can "focus on cinema's use value—the way that filmmakers, audiences, film reviewers, advertisements, and cultural discourses interact with and affect the film text—offers a more pragmatic, localized approach to genre history" (5). This way of looking at genres in a cyclical manner, also helps explain Western's continued popularity and undying nature as it is recycled time and again in different eras, with different sensibilities, to address the concerns of today.

Yet, this terminology of 'the cycle' should not be taken as an evolution or progression of the genre towards an arbitrary set of aesthetic, critical, and popular desires but as a temporal designation that represents how the films interact with the psychomachia and sociopolitics of their respective eras and create filmic representations and narrative discourses in response. To illustrate this point, Mayer and Roche (2022) comment on the validity of alternative readings of classical Western film texts and suggest how films like John Ford's 1924 *Iron Horse*, "when read in context," appear to be "much bolder in rewriting the history of the West and challenging national politics than many recent productions" (8). Noting how "[f]raming the history of the Western in terms of evolution both downplays the revisionist and anti-imperialist work of classical films, and overrates the political progress achieved by revisionist films," Mayer and Roche assert that "[v]iewing the Western as a conservative or imperialist genre amounts to disregarding the ways cultural products not simply reflect but respond to dominant narratives of national identity" (8).

The other leg of this proposed model to understand the Western genre better lies in the recent turn to "critical transnationalism" to approach the genre. According to Mayer and

Roche (2022), transnationalism impacted several disciplines "and as a theory renewed scientific perspectives by shifting focus from nation-centered concerns and interpretations to notions of hybridity, exchange, or articulation that appear when looking across borders, revealing contrasting points and common threads, and redefining notions of identity and power" (2). In film studies, and in the examination of genre, this theory developed into a perception of *transnational cinema* that "refers to films that cross national borders, as stories, as productions, and sometimes as both" (Mayer and Roche 2022, 2). Exploring "the tensions and dialogic relationship between national and transnational, rather than simply negating one in favor of the other," transnational film studies, according to Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim (2010), recognizes "the potential for local, regional and diasporic film cultures to affect, subvert and transform national and transnational cinemas" (18). Defining transnational film studies as a stance on interpreting the international fluxes of production and reception of films that come from national film industries, Higbee and Lim (2010) write:

> In the study of films, a critical transnationalism… interrogates how these film-making activities negotiate with the national on all levels—from cultural policy to financial sources, from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation's image of itself. In examining all forms of cross-border film-making activities, it is also always attentive to questions of postcoloniality, politics and power, and how these may, in turn, uncover new forms of neocolonialist practices in the guise of popular genres or auteurist aesthetics (18).

The contemporary approach to Westerns is particularly keen on both past and present perspectives, originating from the global filmmaking world. These perspectives also offer a far more accurate historical narrative of the genre's already transnational ontology (see section 1.1). Establishing themselves within the recent transnational turn in film studies, recent works like *Crossing Frontiers: Intercultural Perspectives on the Western* (2015) by Thomas Klein, Ivo Ritzer, and Peter W. Schulze, and *International Westerns: Re-locating the Frontier* (2014) by Cynthia Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper (a collected work which features two essays on Westerns from Turkey) examine non-U.S. Westerns and how the filmmakers put the genre into use to create filmic expressions. *The Post-2000 Film Western: Contexts, Transnationality, Hybridity* (Marek Paryż 2015) expands on Neil Campbell's (2008) earlier work, *The Rhizomatic West*, and argues that crossing

between genres and borders is symptomatic of contemporary transnational Western production. In his 2017 study, *Eastern Westerns: Film and Genre Outside and Inside Hollywood*, Stephen Teo explores Westerns coming from various countries in Asia. Additionally, he deconstructs classical Western texts from Hollywood from an ethnic Asian perspective. In their 2018 collection, *The Western in the Global South*, MaryEllen Higgins, Rita Keresztesi, and Danya Oscherwitz examine how filmmakers appropriated US-American and Italian Westerns in the Global South to scrutinize practices of colonialism. In the 2018 vo*lume Unbridling the Western Film Auteur: Contemporary, Transnational and Intertextual Explorations*, Emma Hamilton and Alistair Rolls also explore Western genre film auteurship from a transnational perspective. Finally, Mayer and Roche's recent collected work, *Transnationalism and Imperialism: Endurance of the Global Western Film*, combines transnational film studies with transnational histories of the empire to provide historical and political context for transnational studies of Westerns. All these works concentrating on the Western and negotiating transnationality through the concept of genre showcase how this critical methodology is well wrought into contemporary genre criticism and theory.

Significant as they are, these studies leave gaps for extensive viewpoints related to film Western coming from regions like Turkey. Except for *International Westerns: Re-locating the Frontier*, none of the works surveyed here examine the Western genre film production coming from Turkey. The essays featured in Miller and Van Riper's work also leave much room for further exploration. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how Turco-Westerns depict Turkey, specifically Anatolia, as a mythified frontier space through discourse and visual representation, taking space as a geographical, political, and cinematic unit. Yet, before getting to that analysis, I must return to the actual case studies under examination here: films. The following two sections explore the revitalized energy that the Western genre experienced in the last decade. With this brief survey, I will trace the discourses, ideologies, and rhetorics of contemporary Westerns. Surveying these allows me to map the differences and similarities between contemporary Westerns and Turco-Westerns made in between 1959 and 1975 in the later chapters of this thesis.

1.3. One Eye Looks to the Future, the Other to the Past

Why devote a thesis to Westerns, arguably the most studied and established film genre in all film studies academia? A part of the answer lies in what anachronistic readings of Westerns provide in this day and age. In such a chaotic world suffering war, pandemic, housing issues, corruption, and impending ecological catastrophe, Westerns offer historical performatives: promises of the future by looking back at the past. In the words of scholar Bryant Keith Alexander (2012), Westerns present filmic fables about:

> [P]erformative masculinity and femininity, race relations and the propriety and power of Whiteness, arguments on human rights and social justice, testaments on environmentalism and sustainability, and amongst others—a challenge to the audiences to engage in a set of associational politics as they aligned themselves with particular characters and choices (471).

In her work, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, Shoshana Felman (2003) explains the contested theory of performative by tying it to the act of promising. Building upon J.L. Austin's (1962) seminal definition of "performative," in which Austin argues that "issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (6-7), Felman proposes that language means different things depending on the context and the performance of the one who utters it. For Felman, whether a statement is true or false, language can exist in forms that are not true and false but in the middle of these two positions. Studying Moliere's 1665 play, *Don Juan*, Felman closely analyses the rhetoric used by the titular character to promise to marry two the females that he pursues—Charlotte and Mathurine—only to rescind his promise by challenging the institution of promising and performatives like "I do! [accept you as a partner]" (4). Westerns are "historical performatives" in this sense as they consistently present an image of the past that never quite existed that way—blur the filmic facsimile of history with the imaginative forces of fiction.

Della Pollock (1998) first alludes to the idea of "historic performatives" in her introductory essay to *Exceptional Spaces*. According to Pollock, "[f]rom the perspective of narrativity, historical action and history writing collapse into each other. The writing of history becomes the ultimate historical performance, making the events meaningful by

talking about them, by investing them with the cultural and political assumptions carried in language itself" (13). In his work *Gunfighter Nation* (1992), Richard Slotkin affirms that Westerns are positioned around a similar phenomenological situation by following the actions of a central hero. Slotkin states that "[w]hen history is translated into myth, the complexities of social and historical experiences are simplified and compressed into the actions of representative individuals and 'heroes.' The narrative of the hero's action exemplifies and tests the political and/or moral validity of a particular approach to the use of human powers in the material world" (13–14).

Taking Pollock and Slotkin's theorization as a basis, I argue that Westerns were promulgated by studios and gained such historic popularity that they have replaced the truth and started to *perform* in its stead—thus *generating* history in an audiovisual format. In a sense, Westerns promise a performative version of American history to create new narratives for modern times. Jim Kitses (1970) also affirms this claim when he writes that the Western "is American history...American frontier life provides American frontier life provides the millue and mores of the western" (qtd. in Lee Broughton 2016, 1). Furthermore, Westerns also provide a performative economy of convenience and repetition that allows filmic signifiers to recirculate with ease, both for the filmmakers and audiences. Connoting how Westerns *perform* in economic ways, Giovanni Scognamillo and Metin Demirhan (2005) draw an analogy between Western genre and Turkish history films depicting clashes between Anatolian Turks (Seljuks and, later, Ottomans) and Byzantines, arguing how these history films actually performed as Westerns from the perspective of narrative save for changes in costume and decors (141).

One can always challenge my claim of historical performatives by pointing to cinema's ontological function to work as such: creating history by performing, dressing up, setting up buildings in form of sets, and capturing them in the form of moving images. However, Western genre movies have a special place in this function as they are *the* mythical-historical performatives of cinema. Matthew Carter (2015) summarizes this act of performative mythology building by writing:

> The source of this mythology was a political discourse informed by notions of Anglo-American racial superiority and American exceptionalism. Together with a popular culture

> that demanded a heroic version of history, such 'frontier narratives' flourished first in the dime novels and stage shows of the late nineteenth century. But the principal medium whereby frontier mythology was popularised in the twentieth century was, of course, the cinema. (1)

Echoing Carter's observations, Robert B. Pippin (2010) similarly draws attention to how Westerns ascribe a "mythic universality" while being "very much about America and the self-understanding of rapid American modernization in the West in the nineteenth century" (21). Pippin marks that the Western plot builds on a character tragedy stemming from the interaction between feudal/provincial individuals and the advent of modernity, such as organized and industrial farming, trains, railroads, and of course, mercantile towns promulgating capitalism (22). This historical potential also means that the genre carries a vast potential to create new representations of alternative ways of thinking and existing. "The Western is particularly suited to transnational circulation and cocreation," according to Mayer and Roche (2022), since "its imperial language of oppression and emancipation is global, its premises and arguments are shared and felt everywhere. Filmmakers around the world can mobilize the Western to comment on the structuring persistence of imperial history in contemporary globalized culture and raise questions of responsibility and continued oppression" (9). Therefore, it is important to understand the undying interest in Westerns no matter the time and look at historical productions of the Western genre coming from international contexts with contemporary critical eyes and film theory.

Looking at the current revitalized global interest in Westerns, then, is just a starting point to observe how this genre was ideologically coded and disseminated as a discursive outlet. Tracing the Western's contemporary cinematic life to chart the contemporary discourses and new perspectives imbued into the genre by filmmakers in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, class, and sexuality also enables a comparative revisitation of the Westerns made in Turkey between 1959 and 1975 with similar critical lenses. This survey can also help explain why Westerns, while focusing so much on America, have always contained a universal core that allowed it to express the negotiation of various levels of universal personal and societal politics.

1.4. Contemporary Re-Revisionism of the Western

Many label the Western as a dead genre that lost its popular appeal with audiences. Yet, according to Neil Campbell (2013), it is a genre that "refuses to remain dead" (409). He proposes that the Western persisted for so long by surpassing "generic boundaries, poaching and borrowing from many different earlier traditions…returning [to] global American and global cultures in various forms" (410). There is an extensive scholarship that rightfully looks at the 1970s and 1980s as the era in which the Western genre was reformulated and rejuvenated. The body of this literature mostly dubs these Westerns as "revisionist" (Nelson, 2011; Nelson, 2013; Nelson, 2015; Wallin and Godfrey, 2019). However, to build a contemporary bridge to the eventual topic of my thesis, I would like to turn my critical spectacles to a recent decade that brought Westerns back to mainstream relevance.

The beginning of the 2010s observed a revitalized interest with the Western as a cinematic genre. Since then, this genre has enjoyed various representations from independent and auteur filmmakers, established studios and television channels, multiplatform streaming companies, and finding representations in different audiovisual mediums like videogames. The decade started with films like *True Grit* (dir. Coen Brothers, 2010), *Meek's Cutoff* (dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2010), *Rango* (dir. Gore Verbinski, 2011), and *The Warrior's Way* (dir. Lee Seungmoo, 2010). These movies ranged from a remake of one of the genre's revisionist classics to a feminist revision of the genre by an independent auteur director, followed by an animated Western and a global coproduction. The beginning of the 2010s also witnessed other contributions to the canon of the Western genre from different areas of audiovisual media. The video game Western by Rockstar Studios, *Red Dead Redemption* (2010) and its sequel *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), Sci-Fi Western series *Westworld* (2018-2022) and urban/contemporary Western TV series *Justified* (2010-2015) can be regarded as the other seminal works of Western that came about in this period.

This revitalized interest shown in Western has also been an observable global phenomenon. While Western has hybridized with other genres to create all sorts of off-

shoots within the American film industry (Miller and Van Riper 2012, Miller and Van Riper 2014, Campbell 2013, Johnson et al. 2020), it has also transcended those borders and become international. As Miller and Van Riper (2012) state, the "national and ethnic meanings that appropriate, adapt, and reinvent the Western outside of the geographical confines of North America" are essential to reapproach the Western from contemporary spectacles to conduct new cultural analyses. In my undergraduate finishing project, I explored two Turkish films made around this period which intersect with this rejuvenation spree and can be considered within the confines of Western's generic formations. *Yahşi Batı* (dir. Ömer Faruk Sorak, 2010)—a comedy starring one of Turkey's most famous comedians, Cem Yılmaz—and Nuri Bilge Ceylan's Cannes Gran Prix-winning post-Western *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* (*Once Upon A Time in Anatolia*, 2011) both engage with the topos of this classic film genre and released around this time. *Yahşi Batı* does this overtly by parodying notes from seminal Westerns and the transnational entries of the genre in different avenues, like the Franco-Belgian comic book series (and later television cartoon) *Lucky Luke* and *Yakari*. Ceylan's *Once Upon A Time in Anatolia*, on the other hand, interacts with the Western genre with its title and cinematography as the influences of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon A Time in the West* (1968) are abundant in the film alongside Ceylan's signature stylistic combination of slow cinema and poetic realist aesthetics. In this project, as a coda, I pointed to the understudied history of the Western genre in Turkey that should be bolstered with in-depth formal analyses. This thesis takes this research a step further and looks back at Turkish cinema's past to understand the aesthetics and historical politics of Westerns in Turkey.

The revival of the Western genre, observed also in Turkish cinema, was not an isolated case limited only to 2010. It continued with other forays into the Western genre, such as Quentin Tarantino's pioneering work *Django Unchained* (2012), which explored the history of African American gunslingers and cowboys in the Wild West. Since *Django* and its critical success, the global and American film industry has been deeply interested in approaching Western from a multicultural perspective to tell Western narratives from a more diverse spectrum. Films like Hughes Brothers' dystopic Western *The Book of Eli* (2010), Brett William Mauser and James A. House's *Bass Reeves* (2010), Gore Verbinski's *The Lone Ranger* (2012), Antoine Fuqua's *The Magnificent Seven* (2017),

Tarantino's divisive *Hateful Eight* (2015), Rockstar Studios' videogame epic *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), and Jeymes Samuel's recent *The Harder They Fall* (2021) all offer discourses that approach Western from a liberal re-revisionist ethnic perspective. In short, the progressive discourses and texts of this era are leading Westerns to explore the narratives of ethnically other cowboys and gunslingers such as African, Asian, or Native Americans.

The Western genre has always depicted representations of ethnic differences and the politics inherent in this topic. Nonetheless, classical Westerns situated racial politics in monochrome, racist, and even sexist binaries that abjectified the diversity of its ethnic others promote the white/Euro-American power hegemony (Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson 1998, 3). This also points to a historical marginalization in the genre where people of color and different identifications were denied representation in Western films until the 1960s. Talking about African American representation in Westerns, scholar Paul Varner (2008), for instance, historicizes that "the dominant role of African Americans in Westerns has always been as 'racial others'" (3). Varner associates the developments in the civil rights movement as a critical point in which racial and ethnic representation in Westerns changed, as he cites the Western careers of black actors like Woody Strode and Ossie Davis. This trend also coincides with the growing academic scholarship on the history of African American West since the 1970s, as historians researched and unearthed many interesting facts about the quantity and quality of African American presence in the American West (Herbert G. Ruffin II 2018, 363).

Many scholars consider this re-revisionist trend to be an intervention into the ethnically monolithic and Caucasian representations of classical Westerns (Tompkins, 1992; Allmendinger, 2008; Johnson, 2014; Fine et al., 2020). In their introductory chapter to the collected work *Weird Westerns*: *Race*, *Gender*, *Genre* (2020), Johnson, Lush, and Spurgeon also point out the underrepresentation of African Americans in the genre, noting "[d]espite that rich historical legacy, African Americans remain underrepresented in the fictionalized version of western history that comes to us through the genre western" (19). Elsewhere in their study, they so usefully summarize the gendered and ethnic politics of classical Westerns, highlighting that:

> The western, in other words, is a genre obsessed with the violence necessary to police the borders of white American masculinity as those borders grind against gender and racial identities, cultural and social identities, Native American frontiers and national borderlands, and imaginary lines between civilization and savagery, freedom and conquest. (4)

While classical Westerns are mostly about upkeeping a white, cis-heteronormative Euro-American masculinity, the 're-revisionist' inclination in the Western genre delved into telling the stories of *other* Western subjects, including *women*. Jane Tompkins (1992) calls classical Westerns a "fare for men," suggesting that the male sex is "*the* ideal, certainly the only one worth dying for" (italics in original; 17-18). "Women regularly identify across the gender lines" when they are "engaged" by the narrative and cinematic gaze of Westerns, remarks Tompkins. She also asks a pertinent question that is still mostly missing in Western film studies academia: "'Man?' What about woman?" (15). Sue Matheson (2020), in her introduction to the collected anthology titled *Women in Western*, notes "the largely unexamined roles of women in the overwhelming numbers of Westerns produced on film and television, before and after the Second World War" and adds that "the appearance of the 'feminist Western' offer new frontiers for the genre's scholars and general audiences" (15). Films like Jean-Claude La Marre's *Gang of Roses* (2003), Kelly Reichardt's masterpiece *Meek's Cutoff* (2011), and Tommy Lee Jones's *The Homesman* (2014) revise their portrayal of Western women in line with contemporary sensibilities according to the scholar. Andrew Patrick Nelson (2020) argues that one of these films, *Meek's Cutoff*, is truly a revolutionary feminist Western as the filmmakers truly capture women's work, labor, and role in the American frontier. Nelson claims that the movie "aligns the audience's experience of the film's events with its three female characters" and further suggests that the film is a "feminist intervention into the Western" that breaks scopophilic molds of classical cinema highlighted by Laura Mulvey (1975) (14).

The re-revisionist Western also turned its attention toward the perspectives and imaginaries coming from minoritarian positions of sexual orientation and gender within the Western genre context. Although one must place the origin of queer Westerns in films like Howard Hawk's *Red River* (1948), Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954), Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *There was a Crooked Man* (1970), Andrew Herbert and Scott Hanson's *Song of the Loon* (1970), and Peter Madak's *Zorro, The Gay Blade* (1981), the

contemporary Western's interest in queer representations owes much of its momentum to Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). Since Lee's movie, the revisionist genre saw innovative and outstanding installments commenting on queer representations and politics like Simon Savory's *Bruno and Earlene Go to Vegas* (2013), Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* (2019), and, most recently, Jane Campion's *The Power of the Dog* (2021).

Discussing queer sexuality in Westerns, Christopher Lee Coney and Zoe Trodd (2008) identify an "invisible culture" of homoeroticism and homosexuality in classical Westerns. The scholars resort to an audience response from a real-life cowboy who identifies as gay. This individual, a real-life cowboy who is both gay and an avid viewer of Westerns, interprets a scene between Dunson (John Wayne) and Matt (Montgomery Clift) in *Red River*—in which the gunslingers inspect and admire each other's guns—as "gay" (141). "For those who could see beyond the narrative" of classical Westerns such as *Red River*, Coney and Trodd write, "the Western offered radical redefinition of the frontier and its traditional hero figures" in ways that allow for queer subjective identifications in their subtext (141). Finally, HBO's *Westworld* "continue[s] to openly embrace queer sexualities" (Johnson et al. 7) and combines many of these influences and the Sci-Fi hybridization of the Western genre with other media products (such as videogames) that depict the narrative prowess and capabilities of the Western genre and its *adaptability*. Johnson et al. (2020) put it very succinctly when they write:

> Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the western, as important as the showdown in the desert landscape, is its ability to form unexpected combinations with other genres, and the odd resonance those combinations create between the different genres. (2)

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the current approaches to Westerns by filmmakers and *the critical avenues they enable for scholarly interpretation*. By mapping the current, revitalized, and global interest, which I classify as the 're-revisionist Western,' I identify how the Western genre is ideologically codified and disseminated as a discursive category. Moreover, this survey underlines how the Western genre and form is still one of the most piquant filmic languages to explore many social phenomena such as globalization, identity politics, and the appropriation of space for a variety of affective and political meanings.

How can Western, while being so much about the U.S. and the specific myths created for the U.S., still broadcast universal concerns and issues? For Matthew Carter (2015), this stems from a strong dialectic that ensures that the core telos of the genre adresses the experiences of more than one group (Euro-American) amidst a national body (the U.S.). Carter writes that the "Westerns are contradictory in their narrative meanings, existing as platforms for debating the impact and scope of the myth of the West on US culture, rather than acting as a mouthpiece which univocally celebrates a particular version of US-American history—that is to say, 'the white man's story'" (194–95). My intention is to use this quality of the Western still observed in the samples of the genre today as an anachronistic tool to approach Westerns made in Turkey and discuss the affective, popular, and political discourses they created. Simply put, I will employ the current approaches to Western as discourses to analyze the perspectives that were either left out by Turco-Westerns or surprisingly represented in a progressive fashion.

1.5. Aims and Critical Methodology

My project, overall, aims to look back to the Turkish cinema past and at a time when the Western genre was at the height of its popularity in Turkey: between 1959 and 1975. I survey this era, in which the Turkish film industry was at the peak of its power, to understand the aesthetic politics of Western movies that were produced, shot, and released during this time span. Additionally, I discuss various commentaries and discourses that these films create. Through close textual analysis, I point to certain translocal perspectives through which filmic narratives are built. The narratives of the films in my corpus, which borrow heavily-if-not-wholly from the Western, are broadcasted to audiences in such a way for them to comprehend this common viewpoint. Through this study, I aim to figure out the political and aesthetic motives of filmmakers that translocalized and paralleled Westerns with Turkey, in addition to tried to syncretize their narratives and iconography with the politics of Turkish space as a cultural, filmic, geographical, ideological, and political formation.

In what ways can audiences, critics, and scholars gain insights about life on the Turkish frontier, ethnic identification, and Turkey-U.S. relationships from these films? My

research aims to bring a new perspective to Turkish film scholarship by arguing that these films were filmic, performative, political metaphors for the post-WWII Turkish modernization project and the cultural mythologization of Anatolia as the Turkish frontier. Drawing on previous research on *Yeşilçam* period Turkish film history, this thesis questions the previously established ideas on the imitative nature of the Turkish film industry by investigating the corpus of Turkish Westerns and interpreting them through the methodologies of film studies.

While this thesis will be very much about modernization politics and it will indeed tackle the issue of "national cinema" and frame Turco-Westerns within the framework of "transnational cinema," I chose this designation of Turco-Westerns to ultimately connote land and space more than ethnicity—studying how filmmakers engaged with the Western genre to translocalize one space onto another: spatial and, in our case, filmic metaphors that try to find their own language vis-à-vis established narrative and iconographic models. Agah Özgüç gestured towards a similar destination with his writings on Turco-Westerns, labeling the genre as *Lahmacun* Western[7] to juxtapose it with the Italo-Spanish Westerns referred to as Spaghetti Westerns (1989; 2005; 2010). Özgüç's purpose with this coining is to highlight how Turco-Westerns were largely influenced by Spaghetti Westerns. Yet, the very moniker used by Özgüç to refer to these films, *lahmacun*, already points to a translocal ethos, as it is a popular food in the cuisines of various Middle Eastern countries in addition to being consumed in their diasporas across the world.[8] As such, *lahmacun* serves as an excellent analogy to symbolize the translocal as extending the borders of the local and tracing locality through food. Although Özgüç uses this subgeneric labeling to parallel Westerns made in Turkey with Spaghetti Westerns, I interpret this act of naming vis-à-vis food as an allusion to the translocalness and transnationalness of the Western genre.

However, I choose not to employ this already existing term in this work. This coining, *Lahmacun* Western, ultimately ties the subgeneric formation of Westerns made in Turkey

[7] Lahmacun is a type of flatbread dish consisting of minced meat, vegetables, herbs, garlic similar to a pizza.
[8] Of course many nation-states make claim to the historical ownership of lahmacun such as Armenia, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.

solely with the wave of Western genre films that became popular in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. While this was a significant trendy phenomenon that shaped the popular draw of Westerns worldwide, and Turco-Westerns certainly partially owe their existence to this trendy sub-genre phenomenon, the conceptualization of *Lahmacun* Western condenses the history of Western genre film in Turkey into a very brief period. Yet, the cultural history of the Western genre in Turkey, as the later historical survey will touch on (see section 2.2.), is equally shaped by Hollywood Westerns and the representation of Westerns in other cultural products (like comic books and television series). Put differently, the influential factors on Turco-Westerns go deeper than this popular trans-European craze in the 1960s and 1970s. For the purposes of this introduction, I posit that international Westerns should be interpreted in a much larger framework. In his brief criticism regarding the existing theorization of Spaghetti Westerns, scholar Dimitris Eleftheriotis (2002) also claims that critics and scholars should study international Westerns within a broader scope of transnational and cultural hybridization studies. Eleftheriotis writes that "hybrid forms such as spaghetti westerns are the product of cultural interaction and exchange" (101). Yet, he adds that there is a prescient need for "a theoretical approach that accounts for the textual specificities of the films and offers an understanding of how these forms relate to a broader field of power relations and to national and international historical contexts" (101).

While filmic analysis will be my main methodological tool in this thesis, a politically and discursively charged domain such as Turco-Westerns cannot be studied with one overarching perspective. Instead, I tackle this charged subgenre with concepts borrowed from film criticism, literary theory, and political science to discuss the broader implications of Westerns made in Turkey. These movies were ultimately produced and distributed at a critical time for Turkey's Westernization project, and its political connections with the Western world, particularly with the U.S. Turkey's geopolitical self-imagination created vis-à-vis it's foreign diplomacy also played a factor in the fictional narratives coming from the film industry in this era. But what was this geopolitical self-imagination exactly?

Mainstream writings on and coming from Turkey, in almost all realms of popular foreign relations discourse, attach the country and its polity to a very cliched position of being "in-between": a position of liminality best described by Victor Turner's (1969) thoughts on being between two positions in a phenomenological sense (Lerna Yanık 2009, 533). Lerna Yanık (2009) notes that "[w]hen the subject is Turkish politics, one frequently encounters books or articles that contain the words 'Turkey,' 'between,' 'East' and 'West' in their titles. Even if the title does not contain any of these words, it is very likely that, be it an article, a book or a monograph, there will be a reference to how 'important,' 'troubled,' or for that matter, 'difficult,' Turkey's geography is" (531).

For Yanık, these works mainly allude to Turkey's geological location in Asia Minor and its topographical formation as a "bridge:" highlighting the peculiar situation of modern-day Turkey as a connector between the "East" and "West" (536). While this is primarily a post-Cold War position, Turkey's close ties with the U.S. as one of its most significant N.A.T.O. partners against the advent of its political and cultural (O)ther, the U.S.S.R. undoubtedly buttressed and maintained this discourse. This period saw significant N.A.T.O. and U.S. investment in Turkey with airbases, military stations, weapons, and monetary help due to Turkey's proximity to Soviet Eastern Europe and Balkans, the Soviet mainland itself, and the Middle East.

In light of this assumed exceptionalist historical situation, I argue that Turco-Western, as a genre, should also be unpacked within the historical moment they were made. So, another way of looking at this translocal (because of how it syncretizes the American landscape represented in Westerns to Turkey) and transnational filmic oeuvre is to interpret this concept within the methodologies offered by "critical geopolitics." Yanık (2011) writes elsewhere that critical geopolitics "is based on the premise that more than geographies, there are geographical representations, that when invented and interpreted, create tools of power in the service of statecraft" (81). Yanık uses this methodology to argue that Turkish foreign policy rhetoric has historically worked to create a discourse of exceptionalism whereby "Turkey's history and geography" have been utilized to "claim a peacemaker/mediator role for their country but also to portray Turkey as a rising power with a liminal status and thus to present Turkey as exceptional in the realm of international

relations" (87). This "liminal-marginal" (Yanık 2009, 534) position will aid my readings of the Turco-Westerns from the standpoint of political economy, especially when it comes to analyzing Turco-Westerns that situate the frontier depicted in Westerns in Anatolia rather than playacting Cowboyship with Turkish actors.

Ultimately, in my textual examination of individual films such as *Enemy*, *Groom*, and *Wolves*, I employ the concept of translocality to study how Turco Westerns utilize the spatial settings and emotions of the Western genre; filmic analysis to decipher the discourses presented in these films as both individual and cumulative voices of *Yeşilçam* filmmaking; and the concept of geopolitics to discuss and negotiate the politics of these films within the wider Turkish internal and external geopolitics. I conclude my thesis by arguing that the Turco-Westerns of within my corpus transferred the spatial affects and emotions of Westerns through translocalization while serving the geopolitics of the Turkish state both in foreign diplomacy and internal politics of defining the "Turkish" home as a national polity and geographical space.

The films that constitute the textual analysis portion of my thesis were selected to investigate the two areas of inquiry that are vital to this thesis. With *Enemy* and *Wolves*, I provide multi-layered examples to investigate how the inner parts of Asia Minor, also known as Anatolia, were "Wild Westernized" (Gürel, 2017) both in narrative and cinematographic ways. Both films transpose Western iconography to an Anatolian setting and produce translocal affects—a feat that Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon A Time in Anatolia* also repeats six decades later. *Groom* is also a significant Turco-Western in that it sets the groundwork for the other two contemporary Western from Turkey, *Yahşi Batı* and *Belalılar*, to follow as a comedy Western. It also critiques the political, socioeconomic, and cultural changes of the era as a bank clerk fantasizes about turning Turkey of the late 1960s into Wild West through the ironic hermeneutics of the comedy genre. These movies, which are all hybrid-Westerns and subgeneric formulations, also provide examples to study the flexibility and mutability of the Western genre and posit towards its universal adaptability.

2. CONTEXTUAL HISTORY OF TURCO-WESTERNS

2.1. Turkish Cinema Landscape Until Turco-Westerns

Previously mentioned Agah Özgüç (2010), one of the seminal popular historians and human memory banks of Turkish silver screen, identifies the period between 1963 and 1974 as the years that the Western genre movie production in Turkey was at its peak (75). These years were also the most prolific years of the Turkish cinema industry. Referred to by practically everybody as *Yeşilçam* (Green Pine), after a street in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul where film production studios were located, this era, for Melis Behlil (2021), marked "the popular Turkish film industry that shaped the national imaginary and one of the most productive industries in the world in its heyday" (5-6). Historicizing *Yeşilçam*, Savaş Arslan (2009) notes:

> Yeşilçam, as the popular film industry in Turkey was called, started during the 1950s, reached its peak in the 1960s (avg. 150 films per year) and 1970s (avg. 175 films per year), then falling in the 1980s (avg. 110 films per year), before giving way in the 1990s to the new cinema of Turkey during the post-Yes ¸ilçam period (avg. 40 films per year) (85).

A very barren cinema industry preceded the *Yeşilçam* period of Turkish cinema. Local film production in the Ottoman Empire, the previous state from which the Republic of Turkey was born out of, was driven mainly by expats like Sigmund Weinberg (1868-1954) and later supported by the military in the advent of and during the First World War (Çeliktemel-Thomen, 2019; Özön, [1962] 2013; Özuyar, 2017). Some non-Muslim entrepreneur citizens of the Ottoman Empire, like the Manaki Brothers (Yanaki and Milton) also made documentary films (Ali Özuyar 2017, 76). After the war, which ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the Axis forces and led to the subsequent invasion of the Ottoman Empire by Allied forces, there were documentary and fiction films productions in the occupied capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, with equipment inherited from the film division of the Ottoman military after the army was disbanded following the Allied invasion (Ali Özuyar 2017, 262; 333-334).

While it enjoyed a vibrant, multi-colored, and competitive film distribution business in its early decades due to the international connections of its minoritarian communities (Özuyar 2021, 15), Turkish cinema, in terms of production of local films, developed very

slowly following the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922) and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Near the end of the Turkish War of Independence saw the establishment of a film studio named Kemal Film in 1922. Kemal Film was the only company in Turkey to produce movies between 1922 and 1924. From this point on, Turkish cinema was influenced heavily by theatre actors and directors, with Muhsin Ertuğrul (1892-1979) being the most influential of them all (Alîm Şerif Onaran, [1981] 2013; Özön, [1962] 2013; Özuyar, 2017; Giovanni Scognamillo, 1990). Five years afterward, in 1929, İpek Film made *Ankara Postası* (*The Ankara Mail*). From 1929 onwards, save for two films released in 1937 named *Güneşe Doğru* (*Towards the Sun*, dir. Nazım Hikmet) and *Türk İnkilabında Terakki Hamleleri* (*Developments in the Turkish Revolution*, dir. Kemal Necati Çakuş), all of the movies that were made until 1939 had Ertuğrul's directorial signature, included performances by Istanbul Municipality Theatre actors whose creative manager was also Muhsin Ertuğrul, and made by İpek Film. İpek Film and Muhsin Ertuğrul collaborations also marked the first instances of international co-productions (Özön 2013, 103-105) in Turkish cinema history while also calcifying certain practices that would repeat themselves in *Yeşilçam*, as well as post-*Yeşilçam*, Turkish cinema and audiovisual cultures like the dubbing of sound and dialogue in post-production either by the actors themselves or separate voice actors (Özön 2013, 105-107).

Nijat Özön ([1962] 2013) writes that the Turkish film industry was mobilizing for take-off by producing more films starting with 1939 that were not solely coming from İpek Film but also from newly emerging production companies like Ha-Ka Film, Lale Film, or Ses Film (126). Yet, the advent of the Second World War hampered this, as the state had to channel its finances, which already provided little-to-no support to the film industry (Arslan 2011, 8; Gürata 2004, 77), into bolstering its military to protect its borders against Nazi and Soviet expansionism. Turkey kept its neutrality through the harshest and most brutal years of the Second World War, only declaring war on Axis powers and siding with Allied nations towards the very end of the war when the Allied victory was inevitable. This neutrality effort led to an oppressive climate that pressured both the urban and rural population of Turkey into severe poverty. Çağlar Keyder (1989) points out that the lackadaisical and poorly planned taxations also increased wartime

profiteering and black marketing, putting serious dents in Turkey's economy, finances, and equal distribution of wealth among its population (110-112).

Due to these circumstances, filmmakers in Turkey lacked both the materials and funds to produce more movies during the Second World War. Various forms of censorship on topics that would upset the delicate balance of the country's foreign and internal politics during wartime conditions also factored into this inactivity. Since production was very costly at the time due to Turkish cinema's reliance on equipment and film strips brought from Germany (Özuyar 2021, 93-94), the industry started importing international films. However, films from certain countries, due to their positions in the war or their ideologies that ran contrary to those of the Turkish state, were barred from being projected onto Turkish silver screens. For instance, Nijat Özön ([1962] 2013) chronicles that Soviet and German films stopped entering the Turkish market, and French movies disappeared from the screens entirely after the German invasion of France (126). These circumstances led to the rise of films imported from the U.S. or Egypt (126). Yet, importing movies from the former proved difficult for Turkish film distributors (Ahmet Gürata 2004, 59). This led Turkish film distributors and producers to turn their attention to the latter nation, Egypt.

Detailing how imported Egyptian movies of the late 1930s and early 1940s found immense success with the lower and middle-class spectators, Ahmet Gürata (2004) asserts that these movies led to the "dissemination of [popular] cinema in Turkey" as well as a creation of "a new audience with different tastes than that of the elite" (77). Gürata argues that these films were so effective because of the conversions or "indigenization" strategies that Turkish distributors, producers, and filmmakers utilized to make these movies appear as if they were local films that came out of the Turkish film industry. Explaining this further, Gürata writes: "[t]he indigenization of Egyptian films [by local distribution companies like Lale Film, İpek Film, etc.] through such strategies as dubbing and inserting local soundtracks [by popular local performers] increased their popularity. In this context, these films were substituted for Turkish films and marketed as local products" (77). What Gürata identifies that this "indigenization" strategy was ultimately a product of the transnational flow of film and strategies employed by filmmakers to

somewhat replace "Egyptianness" with "Turkishness." Nonetheless, I claim that one dimension of this transnational filmic exchange was also to mobilize the Egyptian format of the melodrama genre and translocalize it with Turkish cultural references and sensibilities to create a syncretic and translocal form. These dubs, and their popularity through translocalization strategies, I argue, went on to influence the conventions of the melodrama genre in *Yeşilçam* as well.[9]

Overall, the 1940s were the years that Turkish cinema, in terms of a stable film production that was not under the monopoly of one company and director, truly started. Film historian Giovanni Scognamillo (1990) estimates that around 50 films were made in the 1940s (102), while Ahmet Gürata (2004) writes that there were 53, with 20 of these movies shot between 1947 and 1948 (53). Featuring production crews and directors both connected to Muhsin Ertuğrul and new faces such as Faruk Kenç, Aydın Arakon, Baha Gelenbev, İlhan Arakon, Baha Gelenbevi, Lütfi Akad, Kriton İlyadis, and Memduh Ün—who were all educated either in film, sound or photography—this era, per Esin Berktaş (2009), witnessed Turkish cinema developing into a "domestic art" (231).

This trend—with increasing close ties with the U.S., N.A.T.O., and the financial assistance Turkey received through the Marshall Plan—slowly turned Turkish cinema into one of the most productive film industries in the world during the 1960s and 70s. Melis Behlil (2012) identifies 1972 as the year in which Turkish cinema reached its apex in terms of film production with 299 films (478). The copious nature of these productions also featured Turkish films within the Western genre, as this year, 1972 alone, saw the production of 12 Turco-Westerns. In terms of Turco-Western production, this year was only topped by 1971. In the words of Savaş Arslan (2009), "Yeşilçam 'Turkified' Western [not the film genre but the Global North] cinema by putting it into the vernacular, transforming it into a local product, by openly pirating scripts, themes and footage from both Hollywood and European films" (85).

[9] Foreign film import from India, too, in the 1950s, also helped build the conventions of *Yeşilçam* melodrama and its subgenre singer melodrama. See Ahmet Gürata. 2015. "The Road to Vagrancy": Translation and Reception of Indian Cinema in Turkey." *Bioscope* 1 (1): 67-90.

2.2. Cultural History of Westerns in Turkey

Having briefly looked at how cinema developed until the *Yeşilçam*'s golden age, it is vital to mention how Westerns, as a transmedia genre, were diffused and disseminated as an element of popular culture in Turkey. Westerns first entered Turkey's cultural and mainstream entertainment scene with films in late 1920s and early 1930s. January 30th, 1929, issue of the daily newspaper *Milliyet* (*The Nation*), one of the oldest newspapers in Turkey, features an advertisement for the screening of a film called *Malek Kovboy* (*Cowboy Malek*) in Hilâl Sineması (Crescent Cinema) located at the Fatih district of İstanbul. February 1st, 1929, issue of another long-running Turkish newspaper, *Cumhuriyet* (*The Republic*), also features the program of the same cinema, which contains *Malek Kovboy* and refers to it as a star figure's latest comedy.[10] One of the other films included in this program is called *Banka Hırsızları* (*Bank Robbers*), with the caption underneath the title of the film indicating that it is a great drama starring the famous early Western actor Hoot Gibson. While the transcription and translation into Turkish—as well as the financial situation of a newly founded country that could not import contemporary films immediately—complicates identifying the original versions of these two Westerns or tracing the identity of "Malek," these two ads give clues about when Westerns started to circulate in Turkey. Although other generic tags and broader modes such as comedy and drama were attached to these films by the advertisers, these two films were most probably Westerns given the title of *Malek Kovboy* and Hoot Gibson's exclusive acting and producing work in the Western genre.

Moreover, these ads are the initial examples of how Westerns would be marketed in the printed press for the decades to come, as they were configured and promoted around the primary protagonist and star of the classical Westerns: the gunslinger cowboy figure. Based on his archival research of daily *Cumhuriyet* issues and promotional ephemera from starting with the 1930s, Gökhan Akçura (2020) argues that Westerns entered Turkish popular culture consciousness with movies and star actors like Tom Mix. Stars like Tom Mix were so influential that the name of the actor replaced the screen name of

[10] Malek seems to be a typo or transliteration of an actor or director's original name into the Turkish of late 1920s. My efforts to identify this figure was not succesful at this point in my research.

the filmic cowboy figure, turning these movies into "Tom Mix movies" rather than Westerns (Akçura, 2020). Moreover, these actors and their cowboy persona were utilized to bolster neoliberal consumerist practices and promotional purposes as they adorned collectible cards that came with gum packs (Akçura, 2020). The number of cinemas advertising Westerns especially increased in the latter half of the 1930s. Cinemas, with their advertisement and promotional material, often labeled these films as the latest cowboy action-adventure of a particular actor. Revisiting *Cumhuriyet* issues from 1930 to 1960 reveals that screening and promotion of Westerns increased in the latter half of the 1930s, as at least one Western found itself screentime in silver screens either on Ankara, İstanbul or İzmir. According to written memoirs, some establishments, like Alkazar Cinema in İstanbul, were strongly associated with Western films by the era's youth (Akçura, 2020). This archival scan also unearths revelations about dubbing and subtitling in Turkish film history in connection with the Western genre. According to the March 4th, 1936, issue of *Cumhuriyet*, a pre-Hays Code, 1932 Western named *White Eagle* (dir. Lambert Hillyer) starring Buck Jones was shown in Millî Sinema (The National Cinema) under the name *Ak Kartal*. The caption underneath this notice promotes the film as the first Turkish *sözlü* (oral or vocal) Western, alleging that it is the first Western dubbed into Turkish (Figure 1).[11]

Ali Özuyar (2021), in his study of Ha-Ka Film studios, notes the studio's involvement in developing the Western genre in Turkey. According to Özuyar (2021), Halil Kemil, a movie producer and the owner of the company, in 1949, imported B-film musical Westerns starring the likes of actors Gene Autry and Roy Rogers (152). A savvy businessman, Kamil observed the popularity of Turkish-subtitled American Westerns with the the Turkish public, and invested resources into dubbing these musical Westerns into Turkish (153). Özuyar also chronicles that Western movies, due to the sparsity of their dialogue, were not dubbed as frequently as other movie genres that came before; instead, they were mostly screened with Turkish subtitles (153).

[11] This archival entry must be approached with caution due to the protean nature of language. My understanding of *sözlü* (oral or spoken) is ultimately based on the 21st century Turkish. Moreover, when this word is used in the context of cinema, designated words for dubs and subtitles that circulate in Turkish language today (like *seslendirme* and *altyazı*) automatically makes one associate this movie with the act of dubbing. Without further data, however, it is unclear if the caption meant to refer to this film as the first dubbed Western in Turkey or the first Western with Turkish subtitles.

Figure 2.1: March 4th, 1936, issue of *Cumhuriyet*. Page 4.

Kamil's initiative changed this trend despite becoming the laughing stock of the Turkish film industry in the process (Osman F. Seden qtd. in Özuyar 2021, 154). In the end, Halil Kamil's efforts proved very profitable as the wider public, especially Anatolian audiences, loved these movies and demanded more of them (154). In order to boost the popularity of these dubs furthermore, Ha-Ka Film decided to "indigenize" and, I claim, translocalize the heroes of these musical Westerns further as these Westerns dubbed by Ha-Ka film would eventually feature characters played by the likes of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers singing traditional Turkish folk songs like *bozlak*, *uzun hava*, and *gazel* (Özuyar 2021, 154).

Other than film, Westerns also found widespread popularity in Turkey with another visual entertainment medium: comic books. Hakan Alpin (2006) historicizes that the first Western-themed comic books were released on the pages of a magazine called *1001 Roman* (*1001 Novels*), which was founded in 1939 (85-87). From 1951 onwards, the translation of *Pecos Bill* series (*Pekos Bill*) created by Italians Guido Martina and Raffaele Paparelle in 1949, was very popular with younger audiences and a massive success for its Turkish distributors (Levent Cantek 2014, 101-103). The success of *Pecos Bill* was followed by another Italian Western comic book series, *Capitan Miki*. Made by Italian comic book team EsseGesse (Pietro Sartoris, Dario Guzzon, and Giovanna Sinchetto), *Capitan Miki* was released in Turkey under the name *Tommiks*, after one of the stars of classical Westerns—Tom Mix—whose popularity established the genre in the country.

Other popular EsseGesse Western comic series like *Teksas* (*Il Grande Blek*), *Kinowa*, *Kaptan Swing* (*Commandante Mark*) and, *Tombrax* (*Alan Misterio*) also found popular success in Turkey alongside Belgian *Lucky Luke* comics created by Morris and Goscinny (Akçura, 2020).

Westerns also played a part in daily life performance. Influenced by these movies, children pretended to roleplay as cowboys and Native Americans. In fact, one of these games became a media sensation for weeks in 1938 as it led to the accidental murder of one non-Muslim teenager in Istanbul by his friend from the same community (Akçura 2020). Akçura also shares a 1945 story in which a group of friends formed a Western-esque outlaw gang and robbed a store. After their apprehension by security forces, the members of this gang testified that they modeled themselves after Western outlaws and revealed their intentions to flee to the U.S. The memoirs and oral histories that Akçura (2020). In addition, items such as Western-style boots, sweaters, hats, and various types of toys were widely popular and easy to find in stores and street markets. Musicians would often wear cowboy clothing for their performances and parents would dress their children as cowboys for the National Children's Day parades on April 23rd (Akçura, 2020).

The popularity of Westerns reached an apex point in the 1960s as filmmakers in Turkey started producing Westerns starring Turkish actors. Although there is a considerable paucity of scholarship on the Westerns made in Turkey, these films were identified by popular historians of Turkish cinema before, namely Agah Özgüç and Giovanni Scognamillo. Other than his previously mentioned contributions, such as cataloging the canon and labeling it with a name, in his later approaches to the genre, Özgüç (2010) points to how some filmmakers took the genre, placed it into Anatolia, and reworked the narrative theme and affective teloses of the genre within the sociopolitical consciousness of Turkish rural village film. Özgüç makes a gesture toward this interpretation by calling *Çirkin ve Cesur* (dir. Nazmi Özer, 1971) an "Anatolian western" and "the most accurate Western of [actor/director/screenwriter] Yılmaz Güney" (83). For Özgüç (2010), Ahmet Sert (1926-1991) is the true founder of the Turco-Western genre, as his 1963 film *İntikam Hırsı* (*Lust for Revenge*) should be considered the first example of a Western made in Turkey (77). While Özgüç does not give any reason for this claim apart from citing the

film's self-acclaim into Turkish film historiography as the "first Turkish cowboy film," Ahmet Sert's care, efforts, and the labor towards the development and brief circulation of locally produced instances of the genre in Turkey do position him as one of Turco-Western's founding figures.

Overall, Ahmet Sert shot two Turco-Westerns, *İntikam Hırsı* and *Belalılar Şehri* (*The Town of Troublesome*, 1972) in the Western town set that he constructed in the Pirinççi village of Eyüp, Istanbul (Figure 2). Özgüç (2010) details that Ahmet Sert's set in Pirinççi village would be a famous spot to shoot Westerns for years to come, alongside a Western town set constructed in Abraham Paşa park in the Beykoz district of Istanbul (84). In a later article, Özgüç publishes an interview with Ahmet Sert, in which the latter explains his love for the genre and why he invested as much as he did to enable such films with his acting, directing, and overall support to the special effects and set design:

> Our love was acting out as cowboys brother [to Agah Özgüç]…We loved cowboy films. We saw that it was possible to make some cowboy films, and we made them. I made them in the Pirinççi village near Taşlıtarla. I constructed fourteen buildings. Six of them had four walls; the rest only had their front exterior built. And I bought four horses. Depending on the film's context, people fell from the horses as we shot them. Of course, our horses were weak, and when we rode one of them with two people, one actually died. I also made rifles out of wood. I put strings inside them taken from umbrellas. These would explode and make a gunshot sound when you pull the trigger. Later on, I realized that you do not need this system because we shot films in silent and then added sound in the studio. (Özgüç 2020; translation my own).

This interview details all the ingenuity and craftsmanship that went into making Turco-Westerns, and also summarizes how much of an affective labor it was for Sert. Put differently, Sert virtually functioned as a stunt coordinator, special effects designer, producer, actor, and director in these productions simply out of his love for the Western genre film and what it represented for him. This oral testimony also reveals the technological deficiencies of the Turkish film industry when it was arguably in its heyday, as directors themselves often had to *create* their films not only in terms of narrative and visual world-building but also in terms of physical and material construction of the mise-en-scène ranging from costumes, sets, special effects, and even the props used.

Figure 2.2: A picture taken from a production of a Turco-Western in Ahmet Sert's set in Pirinççi Village. Özgüç, Agah. 2020. "İstanbul' çekilen Türk usulü kovboy filmleri." *İSTdergi*, Accessed May 28, 2022. https://www.istdergi.com/sehir/sinema/istanbulda-cekilen-turk-usulu-kovboy-filmleri

Surveying Westerns produced in Turkey during the *Yeşilçam* era, Giovanni Scognamillo (2005) mostly echoes Özgüç. Scognamillo, however, tackles Western-genre Turkish films in his larger project on the nature of "fantasy" cinema in Turkey. Considering the genre's utilization in Turkish cinema as a phantasy, visuals that are created to imagine beyond what is realistically possible, Scognamillo considers gunslingers speaking Turkish in the American West or people dressed up or acting as gunslingers from the Wild West to solve injustices and crime in the frontiers of Turkey, as instances of such fantasies. Noting that the "Western genre flux" in *Yeşilçam* cinema began with the film *Ringo Kid—Kanunsuz Kahraman* (*Ringo Kid the Vigilante*, dir. Zafer Davutoğlu) in 1967, which starred famous Turkish action-adventure star Cüneyt Arkın, Scognamillo briefly mentions how this movie borrowed more from classical Westerns made in the U.S. than it did from Spaghetti Westerns which were so popular at the time (104). This comment, however, lacks any sort of in-depth comparative analysis that juxtaposes *Ringo Kid* with any other classic Hollywood Westerns.

Scognamillo's survey also touches on how some Westerns were adapted to the setting of Turkey, citing films like Yılmaz Atadeniz's *Kovboy Ali* (1966), Nazmi Özer's *Çirkin ve*

Cesur (1971) and Yılmaz Güney's *Acı* (*Pain*, 1971) as examples of these. Pointing to how these movies were pastiching Spaghetti Westerns and Hollywood Westerns like Marlon Brando's *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961) and Richard Brooks' *The Professionals* (1966), alongside Western-genre transmedia intellectual properties aired both in cinemas and television networks alike such as *The Lone Ranger* and comics like the Franco-Belgian Western *Lucky Luke* series and Italian *Captain Miki* ([translated and circulated as *Tommiks* in Turkey] and *Zagor*) that influenced these movies, Scognamillo illuminates nostalgic adaptation strategies followed by Turkish film industry (109).

For Scognamillo, *Yeşilçam* films, most certainly the Western genre movies made within *Yeşilçam,* recycled popular Western films and intellectual properties of former years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Scognamillo also positions the Turkish cinema industry as a curious and unique case that was able to make use of old-fashioned cultural material to create popular new ones (109). Asserting that "despite being missed by many, *Yeşilçam* cinema, with these "B" moves (like Turco-Westerns) pioneered many developments in popular fantastic cinema in this era." Both Özgüç and Scognamillo's surveys agree that the global trends in world cinema influenced Westerns made in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s. They particularly highlight the sensation of Spaghetti Westerns and how these movies proved to be a model for Westerns made in Turkey. The most renowned variant of the international Western film, a brief historicization of Euro-Westerns, including Spaghetti Westerns, and their transnational disposition will allow me to outline how this popular, non-Hollywood-based subgenre was emulated by filmmakers in Turkey.

2.3. Euro-Westerns

According to Sir Christopher Frayling (1981), European Westerns have existed since the beginning of the Western genre film. Frayling points to short films of Gaston Méliès (brother of George Méliès), French movies shot between 1907 and 1913 starring actor Joë Hamman, movies that James Young Deer (a Native American from the Winnebago tribe) shot for the French film company Pathé, an Italian Western filmed in Turin starring Sergio Leone's mother Bice Valerian, and a German adaptation of the *Last of the Mohicans* starring the famous Hungarian-American actor Bela Lugosi as a Native chief

before his rise to fame (29). According to Frayling's archival findings, eminent figures of European cinema, like Sergei Eisenstein, also worked on Western scripts in the 1930s (7).

The 1930s and 40s also witnessed Italian and German Westerns, some in the form of biopics and some in the form of comedic parodies, focusing on the history of the Gold Rush into the California region of the U.S. (Frayling 1981, 29-32). According to Frayling, the most significant of the movies is the South Trolian (an autonomous area in the North of Italy) director Luis Trenker's 1936 film *The Emperor of California*, which was based on a 1925 historical-fiction novel written by Swiss-French author Blaise Cendrars. Based on John Sutter's gold-mining ventures in California, Frayling notes how this film functions similarly to the German "mountain films" of the time, alluding to the idea that Trenker (a transnational polyglot who was born and raised in an area with three official languages) took a quintessential Western tale and translocalized it with the idiosyncratic plots of the German cinema. The post-war period, roughly between 1946 to 1960, which saw battle-torn Europe recuperate itself, led to very few Westerns in Frayling's observation (33). However, after the 1960s, "the Western flux" took hold of European national film production.

In Germany, which was divided into West Germany and East Germany after WWII, *Winnetou* films based on author Karl May's works became very popular with West and East German audiences (Franz A. Birgel 2014, 45-46). Edward Buscombe (2006) claims that German fictional stories about Native Americans, such as Karl May's texts and the 1960s *Winnetou* movies, were influenced by Germany's historical fascination with Native Americans in North America (qtd in. Broughton 2016, 19). Commenting on Buscombe's observations, some of the reasons Broughton offers for this "German Indianthusiasm" are similarities the general public formed between Native peoples of North America and Germanic tribes that they hail from, the colonized situation of the Natives under the U.S., which reflected a similar situation that Germany found itself towards the end of the 18th century under the French Empire, and the situation that Germany found itself in at the end of WWII in which it was effectively split into two states by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. (18-19). The DEFA studios of the German Democratic Republic, East Germany, also "decided to produce its unique variation on the genre for domestic distribution and

exportation to other Eastern bloc countries. Between 1965 and 1982, DEFA made twelve feature films about Native Americans starring the Yugoslavian physical education student Gojko Mitić, who was to become one of East Germany's biggest stars" (Franz Birgel 2014, 47).

Apart from the German film industry, the British film industry also produced a sizable corpus of Westerns. Despite these productions, Lee Broughton (2016) identifies a general "neglect" towards British Westerns in studies that chronicle global Westerns, noting "unlike German and Italian Westerns, British Westerns never featured recurring actors who served to bring notable attention to the genre…Similarly, no particular directors became strongly associated with British Westerns though the British production company Benmar did briefly specialize in producing Westerns during the early 1970s" (163). British Westerns like *The Frozen Limits* (dir. Marcel Varnel, 1939), *Ramsbottom Rides Again* (dir. John Baxter, 1956), and *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* (dir. Raoul Walsh, 1958) were notable comedy Westerns (Sheldon Hall 2012, 5) that situated British individuals in the Wild West while Westerns produced in the British film industry in the 1970s approached their counterparts in the Hollywood with parody (Broughton 2016, 165). Out of these films, *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* also plays a significant role in the history of Euro-Westerns, as this movie features the first time Spain was used as a locale to shoot a European Western film, influencing the broader canon of Spaghetti Westerns (or Italo-Spanish Westerns) that would follow (Hall 2012, 8). The 1961 British-Spanish coproduction *Savage Guns* (dir. Michael Carreras) also continued this trend and solidified Spain as a seminal location for Euro-Westerns. For Broughton (2016), the "untypically strong and active female characters" featured in British Westerns also challenged the portrayal of female characters in their American counterparts from a progressive standpoint (165).

After the U.S., the Western genre is most intimately connected to another nation: Italy. Pejoratively referred to as "Spaghetti Westerns" by many critics for many years (Frayling xi), these Italian Westerns or, more accurately, Italo-Spanish Westerns—since they were coproductions shot in Spain—have since experienced mainstream and critical popularity with audiences, popular critics, and scholars of film studies and transnational popular

culture (Austin Fisher 2011, 1-2). According to Austin Fisher (2011), "the category of filmmaking now known the world over as the Spaghetti Westerns was produced on a truly industrial scale, with almost five hundred Western films emerging from the Italian studio system between 1962 and 1980" (1). Having said that, the Italian film industry produced Westerns earlier before this genre-cycle that started in the 1960s. Alessandra Magrin Haas (2022), in light of her archival survey, claims that "Italian interest in the Western setting blossomed in the silent era, when foreign films using the US-American West as a backdrop (both European and US-American productions) featured frequently in cinema halls all over the country" (164). Citing film scholarship in Italian, Haas points out that "in 1911 alone, at least twenty-six foreign movies that employed a Western setting were screened everywhere in Italy" (Riccardo Redi qtd. in Haas 2022, 164).

Christopher Frayling (1981) historicizes that the most notable Westerns made in Italy mostly came from the Cinecittà studios from the 1960s onwards, which "had a *tradition* of producing mass-appeal films (some innovative, some repetitively formula) within a variety of genres" and further adds many films that came out of the Cinecittà studios followed "assembly-line circumstances" as they were produced rapidly with low budgets (68). Paralleling with *Yeşilçam* industry model in many ways (low-budget productions, fast shooting schedules, post-synchronized sound), this subgenre started in the early 1960s but fully became an established and viable model after Sergio Leone's immense box-office success: *For A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). Lee Broughton (2016) stresses the stylistic qualities and importance of *A Fistful of Dollars* and identifies the movie as a key reference that other Spaghetti Westerns of the era followed (93). Listing some of the focal points of the Spaghetti Western canon as "focus on banditry, untrustworthy politicians, corrupt or cowardly lawmen, Catholic symbolism, vendettas and clans who privileged the family above all others," Broughton surmises that these movies "appeared to reflect key if somewhat stereotypical aspects of Southern Italian life" (93). Here, Broughton suggests a similar translocal ethos that I am tracing in my project and recognizes how Spaghetti Westerns utilized the Western form to reflect local cultural specificities. Broughton also interprets Paul Smith's (1993) commentary on Spaghetti Westerns and claims how Italian filmmakers mobilized the Western genre and modified it to articulate "different

signifying ends and social functions within...[the Italians']...own cultural [system]" (Smith qtd. in Broughton 2016, 93).

Despite their popularity within Italy and Europe, American critics and scholars, for a long time, regarded this genre with "inferiority and foreignness" as well as a "contamination" that presented a "dangerous and degenerate impurity" to the established American Western canon (Dimitris Eleftheriotis 2002, 96). Despite this labeling and filmic abjectification, Spaghetti Westerns affected American filmmakers and Hollywood Westerns in turn, bringing the genre "a new sense of realism" and "voice" (Broughton 2016, 90-91). These movies also influenced the *Yeşilçam* film industry and Turco-Westerns immensely, as most of the movies produced from the 1970s onwards, and even some before this timeline, like Yılmaz Güney's *Wolves*, pastiche the Spaghetti Western form, even going far as to plagiarize soundtracks from these films. Many European nations produced Westerns, regardless of their political ideology and stance towards the U.S., such as Osterns made by the U.S.S.R. and Eastern European Soviet-bloc countries. However, Italo-Spanish Westerns were the most influential branch of Euro-Westerns regarding the development of Turco-Westerns. This is due to the parallels in production methods that aligned so much with the how movies were made in Turkey. Turkish filmmakers emulated, pastiched, or plagiarized the narratives, costumes, and popular soundtracks of Spaghetti Westerns, demonstrating the clear influence these films had on Turco-Westerns

2.4. Contemporary Research on Westerns in Turkey

There have also been studies of Turco-Westerns conducted in English-language academia. Part of the collected volume *International Westerns*, Ali F. Şengül (2014) writes that "[t]he Western became popular in Turkey during the latter half of the 1960s, almost simultaneously with the international success and popularity of the European Westerns. Turkish Westerns were, occasionally, straightforward imitations of Italo-Spanish or American productions" (21). Şegül then comments on the motivating factors behind the production of these films by claiming:

> Until the mid-1970s, however, the majority of "cowboy" films appropriated Western elements to supplement then-popular genres, such as sexploitation and comedy. This use of the Western can be seen as part of a production strategy designed to keep the male audiences coming to theaters for adult-adventure films after the advent of television at the end of the 1960s. It also reflected a broader trend in the Turkish film industry during the late 1960s and 1970s: remaking then-popular—mostly Hollywood—films as a means of attracting an audience for domestic productions (22).

In the same collected volume, *International Westerns*, aided by its titular homage to Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), Zak Bronson and Gözde Kılıç rethink Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* within the dialectical thematics offered by the Western genre to trace how the genre was influential in one of the Turkish director's masterpieces. In my undergraduate finishing project, I followed in Bronson and Kılıç's footsteps in following the Western thematics in Ceylan's Turkish auteur cinema, but I chose to observe the cinematographic choices and the aesthetic world of the film and how it was influenced by Westerns made by Sergio Leone.

In her article on political film censorship in Turkey, Burcu Sarı Karademir (2012) also devotes a small paragraph to Western in Turkey, penning that "[t]here were also a large number of Turkish Westerns produced, which pictured absurdities such as Turkish villagers in Mexican hats and Turkish actors as cowboys and sheriffs (640). Karademir further talks about strict Turkish film censorship in Turkey and explains how Western genre movies were able to pass through these censors easily since they aligned with Turkey's international political stance during the Cold War with the U.S. (640).

In his online essay, Gökhan Akçura (2020) traces the cultural history of Westerns in Turkey across advertisements, film, press, comic books, and performance (including everyday performances such as roleplaying games among children and more professional ones such as musical performers) in Turkey through archival and auto-ethnographic research. Citing various anecdotes from personal memoirs and newspaper entries, Akçura historicizes how Western, as a transmedia commercial form, had been disseminated in Turkey between 1930 and 1970. Detailing the popular reception of Westerns both by the youth as well as noting the critics who saw this genre and its affects on the broader population as dangerous and pretentious, Akçura also contributes to Turkish film historiography with his piece. Referencing an interview conducted with the director, Akçura points to Kadri Öğelman's 1952 film *Adak Tepe* (*Votive Hill*) as the first Western

made in Turkey. However, save for Öğelman's comments labeling his work rich with Western-style and form, Akçura suggests that it is not quite possible to determine the Western qualities and conventions followed in the movie from this interview or the film's posters alone, indicating how *Adak Tepe* is lost to time and poor conservation practices. Finally, Ali Özuyar (2021), in his historical study of the movie producer Halil Kamil and his film studio, notes how Kamil was influential in the dubbing of Western musicals in the 1940s.

Thought-provoking as they are, these studies are also lacking in some regards. As groundbreaking as it is, since comprehensive textual analysis has never been part of writings on Westerns made in Turkey, a problem with Ali F. Sengül's account is that the scholar primarily takes the popularity of Westerns and their popular proliferation among Turkish audiences as a Cold War phenomenon only. While the Turkish film industry was only able to produce Westerns starting in the 1960s, there was an already existing demand for the genre in audiences through subtitled viewings or translocalized dubbed adaptations in which famous gunslingers portrayed by the likes of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers were singing traditional Turkish songs (see section 2.2). Akçura's study fills this gap but given its nature as a popular history work targeting a different audience, this piece lacks methodologies of discourse analysis and historiography to deconstruct the gathered archival findings. Burcu Sarı Karademir's study, on the other hand, makes a very astute claim that Westerns made in Turkey were able to pass the censors more easily due to Turkey's alliance with the N.A.T.O., instead of movies which featured communist and/or socialist motifs. However, she does not support this generalization with any archival research (640). In fact, many Westerns made by Yılmaz Güney were banned for a significant time in Turkey and only became available to wider audiences after the director's death (see Chapter 5). Finally, Özuyar's study stands as an account of Halil Kamil career rather than an cultural history of Westerns in Turkey.

All this prior research, including Özgüç and Scognamillo's accounts, when reviewed together, allude to an intriguing position. Özgüç and Scognamillo, with their surveys, briefly underscore movies that are "Anatolian Westerns," in other words, films that use Anatolia as their setting and furnish it with the conventions of the Western genre.

According to Karademir (2012), Westerns made in Turkey "pictured absurdities such as *Turkish villagers* in Mexican hats and Turkish actors as cowboys and sheriffs" (emphasis my own; 640). Şengül, on the other hand, offers the first comprehensive analysis of a Western made in Turkey during the *Yeşilçam* period with his exploration of *Seyyit Han* (dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1968) and stresses how the movie mobilizes Western genre decorum within an Eastern space in Anatolia/Asia Minor to comment on the colonialization of Kurdish spaces and identities within Turkey.

With this thesis, I expand on this idiosyncraticity that these critics imply and trace. Focusing on the application of the Western genre (together with the aesthetics, cinematography, mise-en-scène, themes, etc. accompanying the genre) to filmic depiction of spaces within Turkey, as well as implementations of purposefully local social, cultural, and political histories and references to present filmic and fantastical spaces of the Wild West as if they take place in Turkey, I mediate these two approaches into Western-genre filmmaking in the *Yeşilçam* period of Turkish cinema with the concept of translocalization. The reason why these three films—*Enemy*, *Groom*, *Wolves*—constitute my corpus stems from how the respective filmmakers behind these movies yoke the Western genre, and the dissemination of space within this genre, with Turkey to find transnational expressions that go beyond the local (Turkey) or the locale (the filmic frontier that is the primary setting of Westerns).

In this sense, one may consider these movies as instances of what Savaş Arslan (2011) calls "Turkification." Arslan identifies this adaptation strategy as a mode of "active (mis)translation and transformation presenting a popular cultural synthesis" that functions "not only as a translation and transformation of the West through Yeşilçam's own terms and terminology but also as a practice of nationalization that carries with itself the violent and aggressive elements of nationalism" (Arslan 2011, 18). While the movies in my corpus also contain rich intertextual charges, which I highlight in the upcoming chapters, they cannot be categorized as direct or indirect adaptations—or overt remakes—of any previous filmic text. Undoubtedly, the terminology of Turkification is helpful for understanding how filmmakers in Turkey have blended international and regional influences to create transcultural and transpolitical expressions that both convey

Western/international filmic styles and local tones. However, it discusses and negotiates these flows within a national framework and its interaction with other national film industries. Addedly, Turkification is not enough to thoroughly examine the affects, aesthetics, and politics related to the circulation and communication of space as a cultural, geographical, and political entity through film. By employing translocality, and turning to space rather than the nation, I am bolstering the importance of space and all levels of belonging associated with space—including national belonging and identification—as well as addressing various fluxes that cross the borders of national cultures and politics. I argue that the particular Turco-Westerns I study in the subsequent chapters are translocalized films rather than Turkified films due to the emphasis placed (by their respective creative teams) on the depiction of space through genre conventions to promote national ontology, contrast cultural and political nuances, and challenge hegemonic claims about ethnic identity and gender.

3. TURCO-WESTERN AND NATIONAL ONTOLOGY: HOW *THE ENEMY HAS CUT OFF ALL THE ROADS* MAKES WESTERN TURKISH

The camera captures an extreme long shot of mountains over at a distance and slowly pans left to reveal a wagon and a rider on horseback moving towards the camera. Their silhouettes are overwhelmed by the terrain that almost covers the entirety of the frame. Appearing minuscule compared to their surroundings, these travelers are accompanied by an orchestral soundtrack signifying the importance of their journey. Carrying plans for a new weapon supply route that would change the fate of a war, these travelers, and their filmic depiction (in terms of cinematography and soundtrack) not only serve the narrative purposes of the film diegesis that they belong to but opens a new generic frontier for Turkish cinema: Turco-Western.

Figure 3.1: Nazmi (Eşref Koçak), İdris (Sadri Alışık), and Makbule (Nurhan Nur) are overwhelmed by their surroundings.

One generally expects to come across the image in Figure 3 in a Western. Almost all the details that would position this image within the canon of the Western genre seems present here: the extreme-long shot, orchestral soundtrack, a wagon, rider on a horse, and

the harsh-looking terrain and its cinematic representation that posits how small man is compared to the nature. Yet, this image is not from a Western, at least not from a Western that was discursively consolidated and categorized under the "Western" generic tag by film critics, institutions, and historians. Instead, this image is taken from a 1959 historical war film depicting the Turkish Independence War (1919-1922) titled *Düşman Yolları Kesti*. Translating to English as *The Enemy Has Cut Off All the Roads* (henceforth *Enemy*), the film effectively uses the Western genre to depict a fictional episode from the Turkish Independence War. One half an espionage war thriller set in occupied Istanbul, as national resistance forces smuggle weaponry out of Istanbul to the headquarters of the Turkish national resistance in Ankara, *Enemy*, with its second half, turns into a Western.

After being given a secret mission, the main characters of *Enemy* travel out of Istanbul to further inland Asia Minor, also known as Anatolia. Lieutenant Nazmi (Eşref Koçak), İdris (Sadri Alışık), and nurse Makbule (Nurhan Nur) are given the task to transport plans for a new weapon supply route to the Turkish national resistance forces and its leader Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. This task is assigned to them by the leaders of the nationalist resistance movement in occupied Ottoman capital Istanbul. As a more detailed analysis will later reveal, on this journey, they are accompanied by some of the key hallmarks of the Western genre: characters spotting riders waiting to ambush them over the hills with extreme long shots; collapsed bridges and the heroic efforts of the leading "good guy," Nazmi, saving the party's journey; and one member of the party—in this case lieutenant İdris portrayed by Sadri Alışık—turning out to be a traitor.

Directed by Osman F. Seden, son of Kemal Seden, who founded the first Turkish film production company Kemal Film, *Enemy*'s screenplay was written by author Tarık Dursun Kakınç and was shot by the prolific director of photography of *Yeşilçam* films Kriton İliadis, who shot roughly 133 movies in between 1944 and 1976. According to director/journalist Gülşah N. Maraşlı's (2006) interviews with Ayşe F. Seden, Osman F. Seden's wife, *Enemy* was shot in Kastamonu province of Turkey, which is in the south of the Black Sea region of Turkey and situated very close to interior Anatolia. Based on Maraşlı's ethnographic findings and interviews with Osman F. Seden and Ayşe F. Seden, *Enemy* was a box-office flop that was not popular with audiences as only a handful of

people watched the film in cinemas (149). However, Ayşe F. Seden notes the film's success in the form of its television afterlife by pointing to its routine display on the official state channel of Turkey, TRT 1, on national holidays (149).

This chapter zooms in on *Enemy* and analyzes its cinematographic, narrative, and sonic features alongside its use of mise-én-scene and how it depicts space. Forming juxtapositions between *Enemy* and other seminal Westerns, I trace the influence of the Western genre and its cinematographic, iconic, and narrative semiotics within this film. First covering previous scholarship on the film, this chapter will cover the overarching topics of the war and the road as key narrative loci that position *Enemy* as a Western. Lastly, this chapter explores the form of the film: the analogous filmic units (cinematography, narrative, mise-én-scene, and soundtrack) that *Enemy* shares with the broader genre conventions of the Western and examines how the space that is cinematically captured in the film is framed as a Western vis-à-vis these filmic features.

3.1. A Forgotten Turco-Western

Observing Turkish film history until 1960, Nijat Özön (1995) notes that the Turkish War of Independence always functioned as a thematic setting to either tell love stories or depict tales of espionage and gangsters rather than to depict the war and national victory itself (169). Connecting this to the goals of Turkish foreign policy, Özön underlines the absence of the Turkish Independence War, as a narrative theme, for sixteen years following Muhsin Ertuğrul's 1932 film *Bir Millet Uyanıyor* (*A Nation Awakens*) (167). However, this trend started to change in the late 1940s and early 1950s. With the victory of the Democrat Party (DP) in the 1950 general elections, the hegemony of Turkey's only ruling party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), came to an end. This change brought with it different ideologies to internal and foreign statecraft, such as following a more liberal outlook on the country's economic structuring and offering more freedom to the Muslim citizens of the country who wanted to practice their religion without the top-down enforcement of Kemalist secularism. The country's foreign policy agendas changed as well, as it positioned itself closer to the U.S. and N.A.T.O. instead of making moves into becoming a regional sovereign power in the Balkans and Middle East. For Özön, these

political events, and the escalating tensions between Turks and Greeks on the island of Cyprus, led to the War of Independence to being depicted more in Turkish films starting in the 1950s to bolster the national identity of the country and its foundational myth (168).

Coming at the end of such an era, Özön classifies *Enemy* as a combination of a gangster and Western film (170). Pointing at a narrative schism between the first one-third of the film (the scenes that take place in Istanbul) as an espionage movie (that he mistakenly categorizes as a gangster movie) and the latter two-thirds as a Western, Özön finds the connection of *Enemy* with the Turkish War of Independence superficial at best (171). Pointing to the cinematography, costumes, props, and heroic characteristics of Nazmi, the film's main protagonist, Özön argues that *Enemy* is a "typical Western" (171).

Nijat Özön is not the only critic to categorize *Enemy* as a Western. In her book on the director of the movie, Osman F. Seden, Gülşah N. Maraşlı (2006) also briefly covers the film and points out how the movie, after a certain point, "becomes a Western" (translation my own; 148). Finally, based on Özön's analysis, Burcu S. Karademir (2012) positions *Enemy* as the first Western genre movie made in Turkey (640). Karademir states that Western adaptations such as these had fewer difficulties with Turkish film censors because of their nature of being American films—carrying an immediate connection with the U.S. as Turkey's most significant post-WWII ally (640). However, she dismisses the movie as a "disheartening" production citing how it was made to cater to audience desires who found Hollywood adventure movies more interesting (640). These writings add a certain insight to the chronology of the Turco-Western genre in Turkey, as neither Agâh Özgüç nor Giovanni Scognamillo, with their surveys of the Western genre and its production in Turkey, recognize this particular film as a Western. In the rest of this chapter, I will contribute to these observations and critically remediate the movie by providing an in-depth examination of *Enemy*'s narrative and formal characteristics.

3.2. Narrative Cores of *Enemy*: The War and The Road

War, its presence, and its societal aftermath is a fundamental aspect that shape film Westerns. I am forming this association not only based on the violence of Westerns and

all the filmic characteristics (like the costumes, props, and the overall mise-en-scène) that depict these aesthetics, narratives, and codes of action and violence. Instead, I am building this connection on the very historical circumstances and their reconfiguration that form the historical setting of most Westerns. Paul Varner (2009) elucidates this point by underlining the American Civil War as the seminal event that shapes most Westerns. Varner states:

> The Western moment refers to that barely existent time in U.S. history after the Civil War ended in 1865 when the country turned its attention to westward and began the final process of settling the rest of the country. The U.S. Census Bureau determined that by 1890 the West had been settled, so most Westerns take place sometime between 1865 and 1890. But these dates have little relevance to Westerns. Most never indicate a historical date (XXV).

Instead of offering a strict date, as Varner suggests, most Westerns position their viewers in a post-Civil War, or during Civil War, spatiotemporal setting. This setting, in which the land and the people that inhabit that land are very much shaped by the effects of the war, allows for narratives where newly emerging communities are threatened by forces outside the control of normative and governmental powers who are too busy reconstructing themselves. Some of the threats faced by these emerging communities located in the frontiers of the expanding American nation are Native Americans, outlaws, or nature itself with the way it can overcome infrastructure. In this "chaotic" context, Westerns often rely on a hypermasculine hero, one who is equally an outsider to the normative conducts of the "civilized" townships but morally "righteous" enough to uphold its values, to restore order to the chaos and bring peace to the settlement.

Enemy is situated on a similar temporal ambiguity as the movie never indicates the exact time and date that it is set. From the narrative clues given in the movie, and the abundant mention of Ankara as the headquarters of the national resistance, the audience is led to infer that the film is taking place sometime after 27 December 1919, the date which the representative committee of national resistance declared Ankara as its headquarters. This temporal ambiguity and the presence of war as an overarching but underrepresented theme connects *Enemy* with the Western genre further. And just like most Western films,

Enemy is interested in what happens to its main characters *on the road* while war and its historical and spatial proximity remain in the background.

One of the subgenres of Western film that extends the borders of the township through means of infrastructure and transportation is what I would like to term "Western Road Film." Exemplified by John Ford films like *Stagecoach* (1939) and *Grapes of Wrath* (1940), and, more recently, with Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff* (2010), in this subgenre, the members of frontier settlements move from one location to another as passengers and face problems on the road. One of these problems is the violent interventions in the form of direct physical assaults from bandits or Natives, who either want to rob the passengers of their material wealth or eliminate these trespassers from their ancestral lands. Nature also presents another challenge in these movies to the passengers by either afflicting them directly or damaging infrastructures like bridges or roads. These disruptions often hamper the journey as they disable vehicles of transportation such as stagecoaches and wagons or directly hamper the horses that enable the movement of passengers.

Stagecoach is exemplary in this regard as it encapsulates both the journey and the troubles that the subjects of frontier experience. According to Thomas Schatz (2003), the director John Ford "created in *Stagecoach* a singular prewar [WWII] Western with one foot planted in U.S. history and the other in American mythology. This symbiosis of fact and legend is the very essence of the film's enduring appeal and its tremendous influence on the regenerate A-Western form" (42). Apart from its straightforward, efficacious narrative that combines performative historiography with filmic mythmaking and delightful cinematography, *Stagecoach* showcases the most concise culmination of all the visual and thematic notes as a Western movie that is mainly set on the road. Native ambushes, destroyed bridges, military forces in the form of cavalry brigades that help the traveling protagonists of the movie, and ultimately a gunslinger hero in John Wayne's Ringo Kid that help the passengers to safety from the forces of "evil" with his hypermasculinity, rugged demeanor, excellent marksmanship, and perfect knowledge of the land are all crucial features of a Western film that is encapsulated in *Stagecoach*.

Though only tangentially connected because of the historical setting of Westerns and its relationship to the American Civil War, the notions of war and road are intertwined as the former often leads to mass mobility where thousands, if not millions, took to roads to flee their war-torn environments. These concepts are intertwined anc combined together in *Enemy* as well. The film effectively uses the Western genre to retell the history of the Turkish Independence War by utilizing the narrative tropes and iconography of Western Road film, ala *Stagecoach*. Replacing the titular stagecoach of *Stagecoach* with a wagon, Nazmi, İdris, and Makbule's journey does indeed start within a cityscape as a "spy movie," but a significant chunk of the movie is based entirely on the journey of this trio deeper into Asia Minor/Anatolia, and the challenges that they face on the road.

The road and the frontier through which this road continues poses more perils to Nazmi and Makbule as the movie continues. This is because their guide, İdris, who is supposed to know Anatolia and its roads the best, is a double agent working for the Ottoman government and the Sultan. This information is shown to the audiences early on in the film, so once the trio start their journey and take to the road, İdris' betrayal, and its eventuality, serves as Hitchcockian "ticking bomb" that builds suspense throughout the movie. Despite these circumstances, the trio of Nazmi, İdris, and Makbule only face major disruption to their journey twice in the movie. The first occurs as the Sultanate Aznavur bandit forces block the valley that the trio must take to reach their destination faster. Facing the titular situation that gives the movie its name, the roads being "cut off," the trio use an alternative path under the direction of an assertive Nazmi: a collapsed wooden bridge (Figure 4). To ensure that their horses and wagon can pass through this bridge, Nazmi and İdris head down to the river running underneath the bridge and decide to stack wooden logs as supporting beams that would lift the broken part of the bridge upwards. İdris eventually betrays Nazmi by dropping one of these beams, leading Nazmi to show an inhuman act of strength to support the bridge on his own long enough for Makbule to cross both the horses and the wagon (Figure 5).

This inhuman display of strength plays into the fundamental mythmaking of classic Westerns with its almost invincible protagonists that never miss a target, run out of bullets for their revolvers, show inhuman strength, and survive the most difficult of odds

presented by nature or their human opponents. This scene also functions as a parallel, a filmic recreation, to one of the most well-known myths about inhuman might during a "Turkish" war.

Figure 3.2: The condition of the bridge is shown with a separate cut to build up narrative stakes.

Figure 3.3: Nazmi (Eşref Koçak) displaying his inhuman strength as a Western protagonist.

According to this myth, Seyit Ali Çabuk of the Ottoman Army lifted a 275kg artillery shell during the Battle of Çanakkale. Similar to Corporal Seyit, Lieutenant Nazmi shows an incredible prowess of physical might for the future of his country to ultimately carry

both his love interest, Makbule, and the plans for a new weapon supply route across the river. Ultimately, this scene doubly serves the mythmaking of classical Westerns with its portrayal of an infallible hero in addition to Turkish national purposes of deifying soldiers, especially those who served in the War of Independence, as heroes beyond the strength of regular humans and noncombatants.

The second obstacle that the trio of Nazmi, İdris, and Makbule face is when they arrive at a village after they cross the collapsed bridge. Positioned closely to Nazmi's rendezvous point with a fellow resistance soldier who possesses the other half of the supply route plans, the trio stop at this village on their way. They are soon ambushed by a group of villagers, however, who detain them and confiscate their guns. The chief of this group, Mestan (Kadir Savun), in trying to determine the identity of these travelers, eventually asks the trio with whom their allegiance lie: Mustafa Kemal or the Sultan (Figure 6). The blocking of actors here, and how the camera holds and sustains the shot, establishes a perfect composition that speaks to the fundamental "good versus bad" antinomy of classical Westerns.

In this scene, Nazmi, whose allegiance is to Mustafa Kemal and his nationalist cause, and İdris, a Sultanate agent, gaze at each other tellingly to keep their mission hidden from these villagers. Following this scene, the camera quickly establishes various close-ups and switches between the faces of Nazmi, Mestan, a finger ready to pull the trigger of a rifle, İdris (who pleads the villagers to stop) and Makbule to elevate the suspense created by this confrontation. Returning, finally, to a close-up of Mestan, *Enemy* employs a shot/reverse-shot between Mestan, who pressures the group to tell him the truth, and Nazmi, who, after a brief pause, shouts that they are supporters of Mustafa Kemal. After cutting to close-ups of Makbule and İdris, who react to Nazmi's confession, the camera returns to Mestan, who asks his underlings to give the trio's weapons back. Nazmi's loud revelation ultimately saves the group, as the villagers also support Mustafa Kemal and the national liberation cause.

As exemplified in this scene, being a "Mustafa Kemalci" (a supporter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the War of Independence) is inherently coded throughout the movie as a

"good" moral position. One reason for this association stems from the fundamental narrative economy of the movie, as *Enemy* wants it audiences to primarily identify with the journey of Nazmi and Makbule in their fight for national liberation.

Figure 3.4: The blocking of this scene symbolically depicts Nazmi (Eşref Koçak), and İdris's (Sadri Alışık) oppositional positions as Mestan (Kadir Savun) interrogates them.

As exemplified in this scene, being a "Mustafa Kemalci" (a supporter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the War of Independence) is inherently coded throughout the movie as a "good" moral position. One reason for this association stems from the fundamental narrative economy of the movie, as *Enemy* wants its audiences to primarily identify with the journey of Nazmi and Makbule in their fight for national liberation. Moreover, by establishing İdris as a threat to the main characters very early in the movie, and, by extension, to the national war effort, *Enemy* constantly foreshadows İdris's eventual betrayal of the group, which makes the audience fear for the lives of Nazmi and Makbule as well as the future of the Turkish resistance against Allied invasion. Furthermore, the foundational nationalist ideology that liberated the country from Allied invasion in the War of Independence and led to its development as a sovereign nation-state is buttressed once again as a *model* ideology through the allegiance and devotedness of these "good" protagonists to Mustafa Kemal, who is portrayed (and deified) as a *savior* figure who changed the fate of a nation just like he saved Nazmi, İdris, and Makbule's lives with a mention of his name alone.

Turkey, reformulated as the Republic of Turkey, adopted Turkish nationalism as its national-state-building pillar as an heir to the Ottoman Empire. The ruling elite have imposed a narrow definition of national identity, promoting a Westernized, secular, Sunni-Muslim Turkish majority at the expense of other ethnic, religious, and sexual identities, which have been ignored, suppressed, or erased. According to Katherine Verdery, national communities and their ruling hegemonies enact this plan to "institute homogeneity or commonality as normative" (qtd in Kevin Robbins and Asu Aksoy 2001, 192). To accomplish this project of Westernized "homogeneity," the founders of the new Turkish Republic commenced radical reforms which directly interfered and intervened with people's lives. The abolition of the Ottoman sultanate and the office of the caliphate, changes in dress codes to meet Western expectations, the shutdown of religious convents and lodges, the transformation of penal and civil laws, the transition to Western calendar and metric system, and the whole-scale switch of the Ottoman script into a Latin one were some of these changes.

According to Georges Corm (1992), the Turkish Republic, by disavowing the cultural cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman past, in fact, deliberately uncoupling these ties by changing the very ways of acquiring and passing knowledge in reading and writing, worked on a political agenda of severance with anything related to the Ottoman past (qtd. in Kevin Robbins and Asu Aksoy 2000, 192). Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1998) also underlines this project of severance by noting that the Republican project and the elites of its governing body "started a tradition of discontinuity with the past which culminated in a state of amnesia imbued in the psyche of the 'new Turks'" (qtd in. Robbins and Aksoy 2000, 194). Kevin Robbins and Asu Aksoy (2000), in their chapter on Turkish nationalism and its impact on cinema in Turkey, elaborate that it is the imagined "deep nation," a fundamental affect built on a societal contract of silence on all the voices repressed by the national regime. This "deep nation" mythos also aggrandizes the feeling of belonging to the national body as well as sustaining its imagined homogeneity that led the psychomachia of the imagined "new Turks" and their cultural production in the ensuing years of the Republic, including the Turkish film industry (193). *Enemy* is ultimately a product of this "deep nation" ethos imbued into Turkish cultural products as the film

combines the spy thriller, historical fiction, and Western genres to tell a mythical story from the foundational event of the Turkish Republic. Establishing the movie upon binary paradigms of classical studio-era Hollywood films and Western genre, the movie also aligns with the national goals of Turkish methodological nationalism as a War of Independence film in deifying Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the primary founder of the modern Turkish state. By aggrandizing the figure of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in such a manner—a hero who represents all the notions that can be categorized as "good" and innately belong to the type of "deep nation" constructed by national historiography and cultural mythmaking.

3.3. Cinematic Reconfiguration of Anatolia as a Frontier

As a film, *Enemy* is an anachronistic historical performative about rewriting the parameters of home for the cinema of a newly established nation. With its narrative structure divided into two distinct and identifiable halves, the film frames space as a notion that is ideologically coded. Establishing a dichotomy between the city, represented by Istanbul, and the frontier, represented by Asia Minor/Anatolia, *Enemy* marks these territories with certain premises. In this structuring, Istanbul (which is located in the West of Turkey) connotes imperialism and its supposed debauchery as the occupied city is depicted as an insecure place of hidden identities, allegiances, and backstabbing.

As the characters embark on a mission and the movie turns into a Western (by going East) with its second half, they face the perils of the road more so than the actual threats of civilization that stems from humans. The human opponents they face, the Aznavur bandits and İdris, are both threats originating from the cityscape as they are tasked by the Sultan and its government in Istanbul. Meanwhile, the rugged villagers, which stand as a parallel for frontier settlers in this Turco-Western, present exemplary individuals of the Turkish nation-state who protect their land and national space against the enemy even while the military forces of the national resistance are retreating.

Apart from this narrative positioning of space, *Enemy* mostly establishes itself as a Western through its form through its cinematography and soundtrack. Here, I would like

to examine the scene that Nijat Özön (1995, 170) alludes to in his article. In this scene, *Enemy* summons codes of suspense and cinematography of Western with a close-up shot that first show the face of Nazmi seeing a threat in the distance, followed by a low angle extreme long shot showing hilltops and the Aznavur gang, who work for the Sultan, riding through on their horses (Figure 7). The camera then quickly switches to Nazmi and captures a close-up of him from a low angle as he moves to the right of the frame. The ensuing shot captures the wagon from behind in a long shot and witnesses Nazmi returning to the position he looked at in the previous shot—completing the 180-degree rule as if it is a well-made Hollywood Western. The ominous music playing in this scene also aids the cinematography and supports the suspense in this scene. Bolstering *Enemy*'s genre allegiance to the filmic codes of the Western, the employment of this sort of music closely associated with danger signifies an impending threat to the main characters navigating the frontier.

Figure 3.5: Aznavur gang spotted amidst the hilltops and audiovisually represented as Native Americans or bandits in a Western movie.

This scene, and its filmic features, seamlessly play into the narrative direction of the movie, complementing the heroic features of the movie's main protagonist, Nazmi. Seeing riders positioned on hilltops up ahead leads Nazmi to seek an alternative path to avoid danger, checking one mark of the Western protagonist tropes: guiding his companions to safety by avoiding danger when necessary. This scene also flows into the

broken bridge scene that follows shortly, allowing Nazmi to display his physical prowess as the film's main protagonist as well as setting up a binary opposition between the hero of the movie and its chief villain, İdris, who suggests going on this scouting duty himself. However, İdris makes this suggestion nonchalantly while getting ready to fill water into his water jug, fully confident that his "proposition" is merely said as a performance, one which Nazmi will reject. Not knowing İdris's true allegiance, Nazmi complies, and rides alone to scout out ahead and learn the position of the enemy, as well as the terrain that they are positioned in (Figure 8). Displaying the heroism and assertiveness of a classical Western gunslinger protagonist, Nazmi risks his life as a lone rider, learns the enemy's whereabouts, and leads his group to follow an alternative path without giving a pause to their journey.

Figure 3.6: Nazmi (Eşref Koçak) scouting ahead.

Enemy's cinematic storytelling starts to recall Westerns even more after Nazmi confidently sets out on his own to scout the valley up ahead. Capturing Nazmi's horse running fast in a close-up and dissolving into a shot where he halts his horse once he reaches his destination, the film hints at Nazmi's capabilities as an expert rider able to handle his horse running at high speeds exceptionally well. Paralleled to a Western cowboy yet again, Nazmi gets off his horse to not be spotted and travels on foot for a while, which is suggested, similarly, by a dissolve that function as a spatiotemporal

ellipsis. The film plays the same dramatic soundtrack before this dissolve that previously accompanied the riders when they were first spotted over the hills. This same soundtrack continues as Nazmi spies on the bandits behind a rock. All of this highlights Nazmi's heroic act while suggesting the danger he is in—binding the movie further into the semiotics of the Western genre as Nazmi parallels the actions of a "good" Western protagonist. Moreover, the terrain in this scene, consisting of sparsely growing plants and mostly rocks, closely represents the desert-esque and mountainous landscapes of Monument Valley in Utah, where most seminal Westerns were shot.

The ensuing scene follows the progression of the plot and cuts to İdris and Makbule, who are waiting for Nazmi. This scene, overall, is also rich with actions closely paralleling a Western film. Makbule slowly walks into the camera from a medium shot to a medium close-up while surrounded by a similar desert-ish space to Nazmi in the prior scene. İdris, on the other hand, is carving some wood into a sharp object to pass the time: a trope straight out of a Western film that links him closely with gunslingers or cowboys of the filmic American frontier. Here, the camera abruptly changes into an oblique angle while capturing İdris' face up close, indicating that the tensions are rising as Nazmi's return takes longer and longer (Figure 9). Indicating his twisted world and allegiances, this oblique angle marks İdris as a turn cloak while also depicting his internal turmoil: if Nazmi does not return from his solo scouting adventure, he cannot acquire the supply route plans.

Cutting between the canted-angle faces of İdris and Makbule and then establishing shot/reverse shots between two separate pans of the Monument Valley-esque hills and İdris and Makbule's eyes, the cinematography of this scene fully situates İdris and Makbule inside a Western as they wait for attacks coming up from the hills. Additionally, the cinematic event of "anxious waiting" is elevated in this scene with musical notes that get higher and higher. The music finally crescendos into an optimistic tune as Makbule looks to the distance with a happy smile, followed by the camera panning right to show Nazmi riding back to join the group. The optimistic turn of this tune celebrates Nazmi's return, almost suggesting that it is an event similar to the "arrival of the cavalry" in which military forces rescue the main protagonists in a Western movie. In fact, given Yeşilçam

movies' penchant for liberally using soundtracks and clips taken from other popular movies, there is a high chance that the soundtrack of *Enemy* was plagiarized from another Western.

Figure 3.7: İdris (Sadri Alışık), carving wood, captured in an oblique angle.

Roland Barthes ([1957] 1991) writes that "the very principle of myth" is that "it transforms history into nature" (128). Western genre and, by extension, *Enemy* put Barthes' statement into practice as they fictionalize history through nature (that is the frontier) to create new myths. Combining its second-half narrative with these sorts of cinematic capturing of space—i.e., the outdoor locales where the film was shot—*Enemy* embeds the type of semiotics and affects derived from the Western genre onto its display of Anatolia. As visual and auditory signification machines, fictive movies can ultimately create interpretations about space rather than present them in their physical actuality through various dynamics of cinematography and sound. *Enemy* translocalizes the space depicted in Westerns precisely through this mechanism: cinematographically capturing the space in such a way and surrounding the space with such characters, plot, and diegetic and non-diegetic sound that audiences cannot help but understand the movie as a Western. While the film reportedly did not capture audience popularity as a hybrid-Western that mixed and matched genres and filmic enunciations, it established a model to translocalize

the aesthetics and narratives of the Western into Turkish cinema and turn the Anatolian frontier depicted in the movie into a Wild West-esque space.

4. DREAMING ABOUT A TRANSNATIONAL WILD-WEST: *DUAL-WIELDING GROOM*

The 1960s were tumultuous, complicated, yet promising years for the Turkish Republic. Betül Yarar (2008) details that the military elite that came into power following the 1960 military *coup d'etat* paradoxically sought to both strengthen the voice of military brass in Turkish politics as well as expand the scope of social and political liberties of the wider polity with the 1961 Turkish Constitution (49). Yarar elaborates that "[c]onstitutional changes aimed at political liberalization altered the balance of political forces by giving way to the emergence of political movements, which had not previously been allowed in the political spectrum" and a switch into "state-led or planned economy based on import substitution" ushered "the further development of the national industry…urbanization, rural-urban migration and the emergence of organized industrial labour power" (49). These discrepancies in the level of government ordinance and ideology, that is, the tensions between offering the polity widespread political liberties only to be watched carefully by a militaristic Foucauldian panopticon, also slipped into the realm of arts and culture in Turkey. The Turkish film industry, as the dominant form of audiovisual entertainment before the introduction of television into societal life, was also influenced immensely by this dichotomy.

For Zeynep Dadak and Berke Göl (2009), the sociopolitical environment of the 1960s allowed both commercial cinema and art cinema in Turkey to sprout and establish a fundamental narrative and cinematographic forms as audience numbers watching local Turkish films skyrocketed (11). In the same work, Giovanni Scognamillo calls these years the "golden age" of Turkish cinema (16), while film critic Atilla Dorsay highlights this period as the "most vivid, productive, and exciting" (23) years in Turkish cinema history that established *Yeşilçam* (29). Nezih Erdoğan (1998) categorizes the movies produced in this era as "*Konfeksiyon* films…made in a rush to meet continuously increasing demand" from both audiences and theatre owners/managers (261). This period also led to the

calcification of several habits in Turkish filmmaking repertoire, such as imitation to the point of plagiarism, the prevalence of front-shots in cinematographic blocking, and fast-editing techniques to create an inferential and fantastical signification style to save money from extra shots, props, stunt-doubles, and such (Erdoğan 1998, 266).[12]

In his work *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Slavoj Zizek points out how fantasies modulate daily realities. With this line of thought, Zizek points out that rather than being instances of "false consciousness," fantasies are sophisticated constructions reflecting ideology as well as social reality surrounding everyday life. Paralleling ideology with fantasy, he writes:

> [I]deology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape the insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our "reality" itself: an "illusion" which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel…The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel (45).

While Zizek rightfully notes how the economic, political, and ideological system mediates fantasies, the power that films have—both as an art form and a commercial popular entertainment product—to reflect vestiges of social reality and critique them should not be overlooked. Surrounded with ideological "kernels," film art presents fictive realities where contemplations and frustrations with daily life—which are very much shaped by ideologies such as capitalism, communism, etc.—can be critiqued and reconfigured through dreamlike filmic fantasy. Westerns and Turco-Westerns are ultimately an enunciation of these fantasies: Turkifying a fantastical and fictive Wild West with characters that speak and act Turkish to create parallels between Turkey, its political and sociocultural issues, and the American Wild West as a performative space to negotiate these topics.

The second movie under close examination in this thesis, *Çifte Tabancalı Damat* (*Groom* from here on), is vital for this reason. Part of the 1967 wave of Turco-Westerns that truly established the Turco-Western genre-cycle as a popular display for Turkish moviegoers

[12] Nezih Erdoğan, in fact, forms an excellent analogy between this filmic representational style and practices of traditional Turkish performance arts and Brechtian alienation effect.

and a viable model for studious to invest in, *Groom* follows in *Enemy*'s footsteps in translocalizing Western unto Turkey. However, unlike *Enemy*, *Groom* entirely devotes itself to the conventions of the Western genre. With its opening sequence depicting bandits riding into a town; decors featuring classical architecture of Western such as saloons, banks, ranches, jails and costumes and props supporting the visual design of its cowboys, gunslingers, card sharks, and Mexican bandits, *Groom* is undoubtedly a Western. In other words, instead of making Turkey look like Wild West through its cinematography like *Enemy*, in *Groom*, audiences are offered a Western diegesis in which everyone has Turkish names and speak Turkish. By presenting such a configuration of a Turkified and translocalized Wild West, the filmmakers behind *Groom* offer a space that presents a hybrid world where Turkey—as a cultural and linguistic space—overlap with the Wild West. With the close analysis of *Groom* in this chapter, I suggest that this dreamy synthesis ultimately provides the filmmakers a secure avenue to both parody the Western genre as well as critique certain aspects of Turkish politics under the guise of comedy Western.

As a deliberately constructed mise-en-scène reveals in the movie's final minutes, the entire Western adventure is a dream experienced by a dozing, probably overworked and stressed bank accountant named Ahmet (Öztürk Serengil). Scolded for being a "dream factory" by his boss—a self-reflexive gesture to Hollywood filmmaking and its popular moniker—this dream stars Ahmet, his colleagues, his uncle, and random bank customers as his co-stars. Films are often paralleled to dreams because of their lucid nature that represent realities in a certain fictive universe. Intricately woven together to reflect realities, films always represent *what happened* through the dreamy filters of *what can happen* through various means of artifice, such as cinematography, editing, lighting, and both diegetic and non-diegetic sound design. While *Groom* does not position itself as an art film that works as a dreamy metaphor for the existential crises that humanity goes through, it does use the act of dreaming, especially cinematic dreaming, in which the main character of the movie creates an entire embedded narrative through a dream, to bring to Turkish theatres a film that translocalizes the Western—alongside its representational systems, iconography, and filmic conventions—unto Turkey.

The deliberate choice to utilize a dream as an embedded narrative is also a postmodern and parodic strategy by the filmmakers who actively reference, cite, and parody an entry from the canon of transnational Western: the Franco-Belgian comic series *Lucky Luke* created by the Belgian artist Morris. As the camera whip pans to Ahmet sleeping on his desk, it reveals two *Lucky Luke* comic books at the bottom of the frame—comics that Ahmet was likely reading before he fell asleep (Figure 10). Calling himself "Red Kit Ahmet" after the Turkish translation of *Lucky Luke*, Ahmet's dream diegesis borrows from his social reality and his identification with the Wild West adventures of *Lucky Luke* to create a fantasy in which he escapes the capitalistic confines of his occupation as a bank accountant to the adventurous realm of the filmic Wild West.

Figure 4.1: Ahmet (Öztürk Serengil) sleeping in between two *Lucky Luke* comics while being scolded by his boss (Süha Doğan). A figure of authority, this unnamed bank manager figure plays the role of the town sheriff in Ahmet's dream.

Directed by Nuri O. Ergün and written by Safa Önal, *Groom* was made by Akün Film, a Turkish film studio active in the 1960s and 1970s, making movies starring prominent figures of Yeşilçam cinema like Cüneyt Arkın, Türkan Şoray, Filiz Akın, and Kadir İnanır. *Groom* remains the only venture of the company into making Westerns, and it is clear from the principal stars of the movie that what the studio intended to make was not a simple Western but one that also worked as a comedy. Starring Öztürk Serengil, whose career had taken a turn from playing "bad guy" or "villain" characters to a comedic lead,

and famous Turkish stage actor, comedian, and *meddah* (a public storyteller) Munir Özkul, *Groom* openly signals that it is a Western. The filmmakers achieve this by showing its viewers a group of armed, Stetson-wearing men on horses—later revealed to be bank robbers led by a figure called Karabilek—accompanied by the liberally plagiarized theme of NBC's television Western, *Bonanza* (1959-1973). However, as soon as Ahmet enters the film as a helpless bank accountant who has no choice but to do what the bank robbers force him to, *Groom* turns into a slapstick comedy. Uttering funny rigmaroles while counting with his back turned, Öztürk Serengil brings an imitation of his Adanalı Tayfur character from *Adanalı Tayfur* (*Tayfur from Adana*) (dir. Osman F. Seden, 1964), which brought him fame and popularity as a comedic actor, into this Western tale. This comedic and relatively authentic Western tale remains the sole comedy Western in the canon of Turco-Westerns until the 2010 film *Yahşi Batı*.

Aligning with Hollywood's turn into comedy Western subgenre, which I unpack in the following section, I claim that *Groom* marks the hybrid potentialities of Turco-Westerns to create *fantasy spaces* for parody as well as critique to take place amidst the paradoxical conditions of the 1960s. Additionally, I argue that the use of Turkey-specific references in a Western genre highlights how place and culture are intertwined and can be translated across locations. Transnational Westerns—*Groom* and Turco-Westerns being a representative of such category—are an example of how filmmakers amalgamate the Western genre, alongside all the iconographic and cultural connotations it disseminates about the Wild West, with references and citations either stemming from or relating to their own locale: Turkey. With my close analyses in this chapter, I spotlight these moments of translocality, and underscore how *Yeşilçam* filmmakers conveyed this. Before this exploration, however, I must deliberate how the creative team behind *Groom* established, in the words of Brickell and Datta (2016, 18), a "translocal space" by not only mixing Western and/with Turkey but also mixing Western with comedy.

4.1. Comedy Western meets Turco-Western

Historicizing the comedy Western genre and its promulgation in Hollywood, Teresa Podlesnay (2012) states:

> Hollywood's 1960s comedy Westerns are often protracted rituals of debasement in which Western characters, contexts, and stars agonizingly perform their schtick in a dollar-store "studio" mise-en-scène that is constantly upstaged and rendered additionally tatty by stunningly photographed Western locations. In the 1960s comedy Westerns, it is as if the little moments played for humor in John Ford's films—the drunken antics of Sergeant Quincannon in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), the fistfight that postpones the wedding in *The Searchers* (1956), the Dodge City sequence in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964)—have metastasized, threatening the maturity and integrity of the host genre (1389).

Podlesnay observes that comedy Westerns of the 1960s—films like *The Hallelujah Trail* (dir. John Sturges, 1965), *Cat Ballou* (dir. Elliot Silverstein, 1965), *Paint Your Wagon* (dir. Joshua Logan, 1969), *The Good Guys and the Bad Guys* (dir. Burt Kennedy, 1969), and *True Grit* (dir. Henry Hathaway, 1969)—usually revolve around the old and drunken sidekick character from classical Westerns and bring them to the forefront in central roles to critique the "masculinist ideology" of classical iterations of the genre (1396). To exemplify this turn in the characteristics of leading Western protagonist, George N. Fenin and William K. Everson (1973) unpack the character of Kid Shelleen (Lee Marvin) from *Cat Ballou* and note that the character serves as "the last word in the demythologization of the hero ... The Western Superman ... reduced to a bottle and his dirty red underwear" (qtd. in Podlesnay 1396).

In other words, comedy Westerns not only remediate the drunkard sidekick figure that occasionally appears in classical Western as a social satire but also questions the impotent sexuality, redundancy, and false nostalgic attachment to the past shown by the classical protagonists of the genre. By positioning the old and drunkard sidekick figures of classical Westerns as the leading male protagonists and putting them in comedic situations to capture the futility of their exceptionalism and inefficacy of their individualist stance against the advent of increasingly polyvocal modernism, comedy Westerns update the classical conventions of the Western genre. Additionally, through the ironic paradigms of the comedy genre (which creates one-half of this new sub-generic formula), comedy Westerns show that critiquing and parodying the agents of past idealizations of modernism can create new and postmodern understandings about very ideals that were promulgated by these characters: expansionist, often-time racist actors of hyper-

masculine Euro-Americanness that are infallible avatars of “manifest destiny” ideology and the monolithic vision of white colonialization it practiced.

Following a similar comedy Western paradigm, *Groom* is also centered around male protagonists who subvert the performance of masculinity displayed in classical Westerns with their behavior. In the film, Ahmet repeatedly fails at small crimes to appear like a notorious outlaw. Convinced by his uncle, Ahmet pursues this goal to collect a bounty large enough to compensate for the error he made at the bank. These scenes result in comical and embarrassing situations that continually puts him into funny and humiliating situations that undermine the routine performance of rugged masculinity displayed by classical Western protagonists. Very unbecoming of a Wild West gunslinger, Ahmet, in his first attempt to conduct a small-time villainy by stealing horses from an old rancher named Pistol Dede (Selahattin İçsel), pleads his uncle to remove bullets from his revolver and covers his ears while shooting a warning shot (Figure 11).

Figure 4.2: Red Kit Ahmet (Öztürk Serengil) covers his ears while shooting a warning-shot.

However, Ahmet is quickly stopped by the elderly rancher, who expertly shoots at his feet. Utterly terrified of Pistol Dede, Ahmet drops his revolvers to the ground and begs for mercy from the old man who reveals, after tying Ahmet with a rope in his barn, that he is an expert bounty hunter who caught many bandits in back when he was younger.

However, Pistol Dede, too, shortly displays his own version of fragile masculinity and comedic foolishness as he is fooled by Frank Fuat (Munir Özkul), who yells from outside the barn that he is surrounded by Red Kit Ahmet's gang. Reversing the situation, Red Kit Ahmet tells Pistol Dede to put his hands up, and the supposedly great bounty hunter complies with this threat. A later cameo by Pistol Dede reveals that he was so scared by this threat that he still cannot lower his hands despite not being in Ahmet's presence.

Performances of clumsy Western Cowboyhood such as these not only subvert the conventions of classical Westerns, but they also subvert the typical performance of cis-heteropatriarchal masculinity displayed in Turkish cinema, particularly in the melodrama genre. Nezih Erdoğan and Deniz Göktürk (2001) deliberate that melodrama "is one of the most popular and powerful genres of Yeşilçam" that exhibited itself as a "mode" throughout all sorts of different Turkish genre films (536). The authors note that the display of this genre in Turkish cinema was built upon the separation and reunion of either families or heterosexual couples (536). Noting how these movies generally concluded with a happy ending, Erdoğan and Göktürk write *Yeşilçam* melodramas generally plots followed this formula: "the downtown boy would seduce the poor girl from a village, the girl would then go to the city, disguised as a modern and rich woman, and take revenge" (536). Similarly studying *Yeşilçam* melodramas, Dilek K. Mutlu (2010) observes that these films "affirmed traditional gender roles and social mores and indigenous cultural traits in the face of modern/westernized lifestyles" (420). Making a broader comment on the "melodrama modality" of *Yeşilçam*, Savaş Arslan (2009) explains:

> Offering a synthesis between a Western medium and Turkish cultural forms, Yesilçam produced a language of moderation, morality and integrity through a largely melodramatic modality (relying on the Manichaean conflict between pure evil and pure good, unlikely coincidences and intrigues, and happy endings with moralistic overtones) (85).

Through its comedic mode, *Groom* subverts and parodies the classical configuration(s) of gender roles displayed in Turkish melodramas. By overtly sexualizing Manuela Şaziye (Zeynep Aksu), thus abiding by the Western classical display of sexualizing the ethnically other (chiefly Hispanic) female, *Groom* places a sexually active female character briefly at the center of its narrative as Ahmet's main love interest. Yet, unlike *Yeşilçam*

melodramas, the sexually active and desiring female is not portrated as 'evil' in *Groom*, like the promiscuous blonde archetypes of *Yeşilçam* melodramas, action-adventure movies, or detective films, which often punished these figures. Instead, Manuela Şaziye falls in love with the goofiness of Red Kit Ahmet and rescues him from Toro Cafer (Kadir Savun), showcasing that heterosexual couples of *Yeşilçam* films need not follow the paradigm of overtly masculine and capable male figures and chaste and demure female characters. As Erdoğan and Göktürk (2001) write, "[a]lthough comedy, like melodrama, reasserted values of family and home, it subtly produced points of resistance to power" (536). This form of power not only came in the form of hegemonical political power but also in the form resistance against the established displays of romance and heterosexual union as it is displayed in *Groom*. In other words, the type of awkward masculinity displayed by Ahmet is cherished in *Groom* as a viable performance of cis-heterosexual masculinity. This is not unique to *Groom*, as these displays of awkward masculinity have been widely accepted and portrayed in Turkish cinema, particularly when presented through the lens of the comedy genre.

4.2 Hybrid Forms, Languages, and a Turkey-ish Wild West

While *Groom* does not star an old, inept drunkard who was, once upon a time, one of the great gunslingers of the West, its narrative revolves around a central character that is an awkward, clumsy, and incompetent cowboy gunslinger. After the opening robbery sequence turns out to be a failure for the bandits from the opening credits due to the bank manager's slyness, Ahmet returns to his daily work in keeping accounts of the bank. Through slapstick gestures accompanied by cash register sounds, Ahmet realizes a $100 deficit in bank accounts but keeps this error to himself as he is afraid to reveal this mistake to his supervisor. Here, through plot contrivances, the supervisor hands him a letter from the previous accountant working for the bank, Mehmet Rudy, who is writing from the San Antonio İmralı prison. Located on the İmralı island in the Marmara Sea, this prison is infamous in Turkish cultural memory as an F-type security prison utilized to incarcerate criminals convicted of serious political crimes. During the 1960 *coup d'etat*, which happened seven years prior to *Groom*'s release, Turkish prime minister Adnan Menderes was imprisoned in this prison for a year before his execution. Interestingly, in 1975, an

American director, actor, and author named Billy Hayes was also prisoned in İmralı for trying to smuggle hashish out from the country (he managed to escape from the prison). Actor, director, and screenwriter Yılmaz Güney, famous for his roles as the leading gunslinger in many Turco-Westerns, was also imprisoned in İmralı for his assassination of a district attorney and his political views on the nature of Kurdish existence in Turkey.

In his letter intended to send his regards to his former collogues, Mehmet Rudy informs them that he has 39 years of imprisonment left. As the supervisor later reveals, Mehmet Rudy was the previous accountant of the bank before Ahmet, but after making a mistake that caused the bank to have a deficit of 20.30 dollars, he was sent to the İmralı prison by the bank's manager. This information leads to the inciting action that pushes the movie's plot forward: Ahmet's quest to put 100 dollars back into the bank's register so that he would not be sent to İmralı prison of San Antonio. After finding his uncle Frank Fuat and telling him about his situation, the latter comes up with a plan to pose Ahmet as a criminal by having him conduct a series of fake crimes. The latter convinces Ahmet that he would bail him with the bounty money, a promise that Frank Fuat does not fulfill.

Placing İmralı prison in San Antonio is one of the many instances that filmmakers employ to combine Wild West locales, names, and concepts with Turkish ones like "dollar lira," "Frank Fuat," "Juanita Hülya," "Dul Roza Hüsniye," and "Manuela Şaziye" in *Groom*. However, the film's 'dream' is not to Wild Westernize Turkey but rather make this Wild West dreamland Turkish. This goal is spotlighted early in the film as Ahmet responds to the bank manager, who asks whether he is finished with the paperwork, with "Yes, my sir!" (Figure 12). In response, Ahmet gets scolded and asked to "speak Turkish" by the bank manager. This parodies not only the goals of the movie in Turkifying the Western but also the dubbing and translation politics of the Turkish filmmaking industry (Gürata 2004). As mentioned earlier, the process of dubbing films into Turkish was an "indigenization" process that involved using adaptation and translocalization strategies to market the product as if they came out of the budding Turkish film industry (Berktaş 2009, 243; Gürata 2004, 62). While *Groom* partially practices such a strategy of "indigenization" by liberally plagiarizing soundtracks and making them look original to the movie such as it does by taking its opening credits from the TV series *Bonanza* (1959-

1973), the film is, by no means, a foreign film dubbed into Turkish like the Egyptian films that Gürata chronicles. Rather, by offering a hybrid language through instances like "Red

Figure 4.3: The bank manager, in the dream portion of *Groom*, scolds Red Kit Ahmet for answering him in English.

Kit Ahmet," "dayı Cowboy [uncle Cowboy]," "dollar lira," "Frank Fuat," and "San Antonio İmralı," movie fully marks, through dialogue and language, how it is trying to reproduce the American genre of Western with cultural elements thoroughly denoting that it is a Turco-Western. *Groom* does not only achieve this through language, however, but also through other types of cultural inserts as well.

After the Mexican bandit Toro Cafer, who was Ahmet's cellmate after he was betrayed by Fuat, forgets who Ahmet is after recovering from his marijuana-induced euphoria, he threatens to kill Ahmet and his uncle Frank Fuat unless they dance for him (Figure 13). Afraid for his life, the cowardly Ahmet first attempts to Waltz with Fuat. After the latter rejects this dance and Cafer starts shooting at their feet, they break out various dance moves that also feature an instance of *halay*, a traditional Turkish dance performed chiefly at weddings. Ahmet even encourages Fuat to keep their dance performance by motivating him, in an Eastern Black Sea region Turkish accent, with sentences like "hadi Dayucum" [keep it up, Uncle!]. Throughout *Groom*, there are also other cultural references to the urban daily life in Turkey, such as making enough pocket change to ride the *dolmuş*—a

small privately owned bus that takes people along a predetermined route—or Ahmet's bounty being high enough to afford an Anadol brand car, the first Turkish car brand that was solely manufactured in Turkey. These references also tie the movie's narrative as well, as they effectively act as dream manifestations and projections reflecting Ahmet-the-modern-day-bank-clerk's daily life and personal aspirations. Additionally, these references create self-reflexive moments that signal to viewers that they are inside a fictional dream of a fictional film character.

Figure 4.4: Ahmet and Frank Fuat (Münir Özkul) briefly perform halay.

4.3. *Groom*'s Political Critique through Comedy

Halfway through the movie, after Ahmet and Frank Fuat's plan to retrieve a substantial bounty succeeds but the latter betrays his nephew and never pays the bail money back as they originally planned. Imprisoned, Ahmet meets the Mexican bandit Toro Cafer, who, after talking for a while, begins crying, saying that he needs a "leaf." Looking for a piece of paper to roll his marijuana, two "bandits" bond while smoking this comedically big cannabis cigarette and quickly become best friends (Figure 14). Parodying the social reality of cannabis consumption and the rituals surrounding this act, *Groom* depicts that smoking marijuana actually calms characters and brings them together to bond friendships. After all, later in the movie, Toro Cafer can only remember his friendship with Ahmet and decides not to kill him after taking a long drag from his comedically large

roll. Here, *Groom* touches on a politically sensitive topic through the self-censoring powers of comedy.

Figure 4.5: Toro Cafer (Kadir Savun) and Red Kit Ahmet smoking marijuana in their cell and becoming friends.

Melih Çoban (2021) observes that many Turkish melodramas made in the 1960s tackle drug abuse as plot points to talk about familial tragedies, but rarely depict the consumption of the said drug (3). Using its form as both a comedy and a Western, where laws and rules of modern urban society are challenged and questioned, *Groom* goes against the grain in this respect and depicts the overt consumption of marijuana without chastising this act. I assert that *Groom*'s hybrid form also allowed its filmmakers to be experimental, subversive, and unconventional compared to the mainstream (melo)dramatic codes of Turkish cinema. Furthermore, by touching on a politically sensitive subject like İmralı prison within a dream-fantasy that takes place inside a Western, and invoking the cultural memory associated with imprisonment for the grander narrative of comedy, *Groom* also underscores that the recent internal turmoil caused by the coup has turned Turkey into a lawless land ruled only by personal goals and profit, just like the imagined ethical and societal decorum of the Wild West.

Functioning more than a Western parody in these instances, *Groom* critically reflects the social reality surrounding Turkey. For Linda Hutcheon (2002), parody conveys "a double

process of installing and ironizing […] how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference" (89). Essentially following a dream fantasy and combining this in a hybrid language by mixing English and Western genre characters and elements with Turkish ones, *Groom* achieves a parody of *continuity* with Western conventions and a *difference* from those conventions with its inserted Turkey-ism. With this, *Groom* not only conveys comedy but a "political unconscious" (Fredric Jameson, 1981) of critique that shines a light on Turkey's sociopolitical conditions in 1967 as well as the troubles that started the decade. To revisit Zizek's (1989) thoughts earlier in this chapter, *Groom* presents a fantasy that is very much shaped by ideology. Yet, through its parodic and fantastical form, the movie showcases how political issues that are product of ideologies like policing marijuana consumption and political imprisonment can be mediated, parodied, and scrutinized through fantasies enabled by genres and their combination. Furthermore, *Groom* challenges the melodramatic decorums that dominated other popular genres of Turkish cinema like historical action-adventure films, romantic melodramas, detective, and gangster movies to present a different sort of film culture for Turkish audiences.

Finally, it must be mentioned that *Groom*'s narrative design follows an incongruous trajectory from the rest of the Turco-Western canon. *Groom* neither follows a revenge story like *İntikam Hırsı*, *Kader Bağı* (*Ties of Destiny*; dir. Türker İnanoğlu, 1967), *Ringo Kid- Kanunsuz Kahraman* (*Ringo Kid the Outlaw Hero*; dir. Zafer Davutoğlu, 1967), *Wolves*, *Hey Amigo Beş Mezar* (*Hey Amigo*: *Five Graves*; dir. Nuri Akıncı, 1971), *Kan ve Kin* (*Blood and Hate*; dir. Natuk Baytan, 1972); nor a liberal or direct adaptation such as *Zorro Kamçılı Süvari* (*Zorro the Whip-wielding Hero*; dir. Yılmaz Atadeniz, 1969), *Zagor* (dir. Mehmet Aslan, 1970), *Bir Çuval Para* (*A Bagful of Money*; dir. Yücel Uçanoğlu, 1970), *Atını Seven Kovboy* (*Lucky Luke*; dir. Aram Gülyüz, 1974). While paying homage to *Lucky Luke* with a protagonist named after the Turkish translation of the titular gunslinger character, the filmmakers behind *Groom* do not parody any other elements from the comic series and instead create a narrative that joins Western, comedy, and Turkey. Unlike *Yahşi Batı*, the other comedy Western in the canon of Turco-Western, there is not an overwhelming display of cultural nuances that tie the Wild West to Turkey in *Groom*. However, the historical and cultural references, and their corresponding

signification, works adequately to connect Turkey and Wild West in the film—ultimately creating parallels that mediate local societal anxieties within this transnational and translocal genre.

5. *THE HUNGRY WOLVES*: THE WILD EAST OF STAR AUTEURS, POLITICS AND WESTERN

As noted in the second chapter, the 1960s and 70s represented a golden age in mainstream Turkish film designed to cater to popular tastes and attract the masses to cinemas. An era predating the advent of television, and its eventual hold over the audiovisual entertainment medium, the Yeşilçam industry operated to meet the popular demands of the public as the most prominent and readily available field of audiovisual art and entertainment in Turkey. However, this golden age was mainly based on imitating, pastiching, or plagiarizing already established narrative formulas and filmic texts, mostly stemming from Hollywood, to meet the overwhelming audience demands and desires coming across all of Turkey. As a larger constellation of narrative and aesthetic economies, whole-scale adaptation of specific genres was a common trend in Turkish cinema of the period, with one example of this trend being the Turco-Western (sub)genre. The films that followed the cinematic dictums and narrative materials of established genres such as Action-Adventure, Gangster, Crime-Fiction, Sci-Fi, melodrama, or Western inaugurated and sustained *Yeşilçam* industry and allowed Turkish cinema to experience its golden ages by following the cliched, recycled but ultimately very affective, effective, and desirable formulas.

Yet, claiming that film production in the *Yeşilçam* period only focused on creating filmic texts for entertainment value, escapism, and profit would be an erroneous generalization that overlooks other trends observed during this era. In fact, popular forms and conventions of generic formulas were also utilized by filmmakers to make films furnished with political charges and critiques. In this final chapter, I explore the interstices between political and popular cinema in Turkey through Turco-Westerns. By focusing on the star-text and directorial work of vocal leftist filmmaker Yılmaz Güney and his 1969 Western *Aç Kurtlar* (*The Hungry Wolves*), which Güney directed and stars as the movie's main gunslinger, I examine the film's politics, action aesthetics, and intertextual nature and

how it translocalizes Western into the frozen mountains of Turkey's Eastern provinces. Analyzing *Wolves'* narrative trajectory, mise-en-scène, and cinematographic form—as well as juxtaposing the film with other Yılmaz Güney Westerns—I interpret the film as one the boldest Turco-Westerns in terms of its political surface and subtext. This inquiry also allows me to unpack the political limits of the film in terms of how the Western form, conventions, and symbols are employed to challenge hegemonic politics of power, class, and ethnicity while maintaining the status quo regarding the dimension of gender.

5.1. Films and Politics in Turkey

Albeit located very much in the periphery from the mainstream, this era of film production in Turkey witnessed films that diverted from popular conventions and profitable financial purposes and tackled societal issues as well as critiquing the historical and contemporary Turkish policies on ethnicity, class, gender, and religion as examples of "political" films. Mike Wayne (2001) explains that political films are those that "address unequal access to and distribution of material and cultural resources, and the hierarchies of legitimacy and status accorded to those differentials" (1). Ewa Mazierska (2014) asserts that political films, or the political charge of cinema, come in two sets of binary dichotomies. In Mazierska's taxonomy of political cinema, one charge of such a stance is "conformist" films that "accept the political status quo," while "oppositional" films challenge this order (36). In the other set, what the scholar calls "marked" films expose people to the ruling elites/ideologies that run their society, while "unmarked" films conceal these ideologies and their apparatuses (36). Put differently, the premise and purpose of political cinema, in the words of Mazierska, "is to affect external reality and especially the relationship between an individual and a community," and the taxonomies that are offered by the scholar all work to achieve this purpose in different ways (37).

That being said, Mazierska's taxonomies offer rigid categorizations for political films and fail to account for the fluidity and diversity that political positions, thus political cinema, can take. The Turkish cinema industry in the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, featured political filmmaking that similarly wanted to influence both the individual and the public. The outputs of these efforts, as will be covered in my analysis of Yılmaz Güney's 1969

film *The Hungry Wolves*, however, did not necessarily fit wholly within the taxonomies offered by Mazierska but rather fluctuated between these positions depending on the politics at hand.

Before getting into that analysis, I need to pause and examine the story of political filmmaking in Turkey to situate my study in a better historical paradigm. Following the paradoxical liberal avenue opened up by the 1961 constitution explored in the previous chapter, filmmakers like Duygu Sağıroğlu, Ertem Göreç, Halit Refiğ, Metin Erksan, Memduh Ün, and Lütfü Akad, with significant influence from the Italian Neorealism style and ideas of the Turkish novelist Kemal Tahir (1910-1973), concentrated on producing social realist films and called themselves *Ulusal Sinema Hareketi* (National Cinema Movement) (Aslı Daldal, 2013). Aslı Daldal (2013) notes that "Turkish Social Realism was also related to the legacy of Italian neo-realism whose leftward oriented politics and realist-minimalist aesthetics fitted well with the socio-political concerns of a new generation of Turkish filmmakers eager to develop a 'national' film language" (183). Motivated and shaped by Neo-Kemalist *Yön* (The Path) Movement and the establishment of Turkish Labor Party (TİP), these films mainly dealt with "progressive" class politics and "universalist" concerns, thus aligning with the new ruling elite's oppositional stance towards the policies followed by Democrat Party (DP) regime in the 1950s (Daldal 2013, 184). On a similar note, Şükran Kuyucak Esen (2007) relays that the working class and their struggles were mainly represented in these Social Realist movies of the *Ulusal Sinema* Movement. These characters were often depicted around the larger topics of internal migration, unemployment, efforts to form unions, and resisting capitalism and Western cultural imperialism (317-319). Nevertheless, some critics regard this era differently.

Zeynep Çetin-Erus and M. Elif Demoğlu (2020) highlight that the films made by Ulusal Sinema movement filmmakers "mainly displayed structural problems in the country and refrained from making the overt political statements" (737). Following Mazierska's taxonomies, these movies were "conformist" in that they avoided making bold political claims or displays. But I also claim that they were "marked" enough to be political as they showed the structural problems within the rural parts of Turkey as a form of criticism against the Turkish state and its ruling hegemony, which, at this point, starting channeling

its finances and their energy on developing, maintaining, and promoting its big cities which led to massive waves of internal migration from the rural parts of Turkey into its urban centers (İçduygu and Ünalan 1998, 216). Çetin-Erus and Demoğlu also elaborate on how the *Ulusal Sinema* Movement ultimately failed to gain popular traction with the masses by stating:

> This line of film production was short lived; the period of relative freedom was cut short from 1965 on as the new right-wing government Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) pursued strict enforcement of a censorship law dating back to 1939. An indicator of tightening government control on free speech, in contrast with freedoms granted by the 1961 constitution, the law provided a censorship framework which allowed government officials widespread jurisdiction on which movies could be shown. This, in turn, led to an auto-censorship mechanism. The lack of interest by the general public [in these Social Realist films] was also a factor in their switch to commercial cinema after the mid-1960s (737).

As put forth by one of the biggest proponents of this movement, critic and director Halit Refiğ, this movement sought to "scrutinize the identity of Turkish cinema—its existence and substance" and further contested that "intellectuals in Turkey despise cinema, particularly as a result of their unconditional admiration for the West and its culture, including the cinema of the West" (Melis Behlil and Esin Paça Cengiz 2016, 1). With his writings, Refiğ pointed towards the adaptation politics of *Yeşilçam* while giving praise to Turkish audiences for enabling *Yeşilçam* and the Turkish cinema industry with their fandom and support (Behlil and Cengiz 2016). His criticism, despite how the *Ulusal Sinema* Movement was also deeply imbricated in similar Eurocentric mimetic politics with their pastiche of Italian Neorealistic style, was also directed at Eurocentric and Occidentalist tendencies of another politically charged group involved with cinema, the *Yeni Sinema* (New Cinema) movement.

Nezih Erdoğan (1998) chronicles that the *Yeni Sinema* movement was made up of "[a] group of writers from various branches of literature" gathered around a new publication, which went by the same name (261). These intellectuals "argued that a national cinema with international concerns was impossible within a *Yeşilçam* associated with worn-out formulas, plagiarism, escapism, and exploitation (Erdoğan 1998, 261). Founding the Turkish Cinemateque, conducting interviews with famous European directors, inaugurating the Istanbul Film Festival (Hakkı Başgüney, 2010), founding a film critics association (Akser and Durak-Akser 2017, 57) as well as allowing audiences "access to

canons of European art cinema," the *Yeni Sinema* movement sought out to create a new cinephilic epistemology and "resistance" to Hollywood and *Yeşilçam* (Erdoğan 1998, 262). As stated by Erdoğan (1998), influenced by Western humanism of art cinema, this group juxtaposed Turkish cinema with European art cinema, international film festival circuits, and the wave of "third cinema" in developing countries around the world to figure out how Turkish cinema can improve itself to deliver messages that were representative of human experience worldwide (263). Despite borrowing the name of *Cinema Novo* with its Turkish translation "Yeni Sinema," this group displayed a particular affinity to European art cinema, especially the canon of French New Wave, which functioned as the locus of their Occidentalism.

Meltem Ahıska (2003) defines Occidentalism as a "field of social imagination through which those in power consume and reproduce the projection of 'the West' to negotiate and consolidate their hegemony in line with their pragmatic interests" (366). Noting that this "hegemony operates by employing the mechanisms of projection that support the fantasy of 'the West,'" Ahıska goes on to explain the particular practice of Occidentalism in the context of the new Turkish Republic as a *double consciousness*[13] which juxtaposes the performative habitation of Turkish national-subjecthood and its ontology vis-à-vis the West. Ahıska writes that the Kemalist "national elites" that founded the Turkish Republic tried to sustain this fragile balance by:

> [C]onstituting their [the peoples of Turkey] identity through a projection of the West in affirming their construction of a modern society. They organized the desire to be modern around the marker of "the West," which they [the founding elite] claimed to possess. By doing this they introjected the imagined nation into their subjectivity. But they displaced what is disturbing for them, such as the threatening power of the West, by assuming a guardian role that modernizes but at the same time protects the "less civilized" and "infantile" population from the "dangers of too much Westernization" (366).

[13] I am employing the term "double conciousness" in the sense that author W.B. Du Bois intended to discuss how African Americans struggle to remain faithful to their own culture amidst a hegemonic White society that continually asked them to change and adapt. Occidentalism, the way it is practiced in Turkey, creates a similar dilemma as it asks peoples of Turkey to dismiss their innate culture in the face of an Eurocentric modernism movement.

The *Yeni Sinema* movement—and the imagined national cinema style that they fantasized about—ultimately suffered similar practices of Occidentalism as Kemalism: regarding themselves as the most critical, Europeanized "guardians" of Turkish cinema against the "dangers of too much Westernization" represented by *Yeşilçam*. Employing Mazierska's taxonomy as a rubric, I argue that the *Yeni Sinema* movement positioned itself within an "oppositional" stance towards *Yeşilçam* and Hollywood while displaying "unmarked" tendencies that align with the top-down secularization politics of Kemalism.

It is crucial to add that this era did not only witness these two clashing movements. The *Milli Sinema* Movement (The National Sinema Movement), a third leg that offered its own thoughts on what national cinema and filmmaking in Turkey should entail, was also in conversation with the rest of these movements. Part of Islamic filmmaking tradition that also found representation in the 1960s and 70s (Dilek Kaya Mutlu and Zeynep Koçer 2012, 77), this movement took a more radical approach towards its critique of the top-down secular politics of Turkey's Kemalist ontology.

For Şerif Mardin (1971), the Kemalist revolution that transitioned Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic was "a revolution of values" (qtd. in Mutlu and Koçer 2012, 71) which sought to change the social performativity of the public into a more Westernized polity by targeting their culture. Islam played a vital role in that culture, but it was seen as a backward Oriental position that stood as a fundamental challenge for the project of a new and westernized nation-state. The new state in question enacted various reforms targeting religion, including dismantling the office of the Islamic caliphate (1924), founding an office for Religious Affairs (1924), closing religious organizations, banning religious clothing, switching to the Latin calendar (1925), replacing Islamic Shari'a laws with codes borrowed from Italy and Switzerland (1928), mandating the use of a new Turkish script (1928), and replacing the Arabic *ezan* with a Turkish version (1932). Yet, Islam was not completely eradicated from the societal consciousness like an atheist model followed by communism. Instead, the secular project followed by the founding Kemalist elites established "an official version of Islam" in which "the state posited itself as the only authority able to determine the legitimate expression of religion in the public arena" (Mutlu and Koçer 2012, 72).

A synonym of the word *ulusal*, the word *milli* takes its roots in Arabic. Stemming from the ideologies of *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (National Turkish Student Association) in the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged the top-down secular ideologies of Kemalist ontology while remaining, paradoxically, within a Kemalist framework, this movement followed a synthesized agenda of Islamist-Nationalist convergence. Serkan Yorgancılar (2019) notes how this movement identified a cinematic "corruption" in Turkish movies that imitated "Hollywood romantic comedies, Italian *Westerns*, and Swedish art-house movies" (5-6; emphasis my own). Arguing that Turkish cinema should return to its original self by being more "national," Milli Sinema movement proposed that this goal can only be achieved by returning to Islam, which was the core reality of "Turkishness" according to the advocates of this movement (Yorgancılar 2019, 6).

Mainly practiced by the director/critic Yücel Çakmaklı, this movement put forth the premise that a national cinema that is *Turkish* can only be achieved if filmmakers pursue Islamic sensibilities and themes to create narratives depicting self-discipline (Yorgancılar 2019, 7). Çakmaklı's 1970 film, *Birleşen Yollar* (*Converging Paths*), for example, captured the story of Feyza's (Türkan Şoray) turn from a secular, Westernized, and degenerate person into adopting moral codes and pious lifestyle of Islam through her relationship with pious university student Bilal (İzzet Günay) that culminates with her wearing *hijab*. Pace Mutlu and Kocer, "[t]he film criticized the Turkish modernization project as cosmetic westernization and promoted the Islamic way of life in modern Turkey as the only means to 'true' happiness" (82).

This movement was implicitly political in that it challenged the top-down enforced secularism that has been fundamental to Kemalism, the foundational ideology of the Turkish Republic, which restricted and regulated devout and pious practices of Islam. It also shows how the categorization of political cinema, despite its conceived association with positions such as left-wing, Marxist, and Western secular progressive (Mazierska 2014, 36) can also come in right-wing and conservative formats. In a paradoxical sense, given the official state ideology, this movement was "oppositional" in how it challenged the enforced secularism of the state; "conformist" in how it depended on methodological

nationalism to make claims to a cinema style; and "marked" in subverting the official dictums of Kemalism's hegemonic ideologies.

The 1960s, on the whole, witnessed contested beliefs, claims, and practices that all argued for a change in popular *Yeşilçam* cinema. Overall, attempts to create films that critically examine Turkish society, state, and its founding ideologies failed to live to their political potentials. However, there was one figure who came through the ranks of popular *Yeşilçam* cinema who managed to utilize his fame and the popular language of *Yeşilçam* to communicate more overt forms of political critiques: Yılmaz Güney.

5.2. The Life and Star-Text of Yılmaz Güney

Yılmaz Güney is most famously known for his Palme d'Or winning 1982 film *Yol* (*The Road*), which was directed by his assistant Şerif Gören while the former was in exile in France. Born to Kurdish and Zaza parents who worked as cotton-field workers in Adana, Turkey, Yılmaz Güney (born Yılmaz Püten) grew up in the working class in his youth (Heß, 2012). While attending high school, he wrote short stories and letters for local magazines in Adana, which caused him to be prosecuted for spreading communist propaganda (Reuben Silverman 2015, 107-108). Throughout his life, Yılmaz Güney was charged, incarcerated, and eventually had to flee Turkey for the murder of district attorney Sefa Mutlu, his Marxist thoughts, and stance on prosecution and mistreatment of Kurdish folk of Turkey as a politically vocal artist. In 1983, he was denaturalized from Turkish citizenship by the president at the time, Kenan Evren, who famously led the military junta that conducted the 1980 *coup d'etat* and silenced all sorts of left-wing activism in Turkey.

After moving from Adana to İstanbul in 1957, Güney pursued a law degree at İstanbul University, but he quickly transitioned to the film industry with the help of famous author and poet Yaşar Kemal, who was also from Adana and Kurdish (Silverman 2015, 108). In his first job in the Turkish film industry, Yılmaz Güney co-wrote (alongside Atıf Yılmaz and Yaşar Kemal) and starred in a 1959 Atıf Yılmaz film called *Bu Vatanın Çocukları* (*The Children of this Nation*). Another War of Turkish Independence film, *Bu Vatanın Çocukları*, in terms of its plot, bares similarities to my first case study, *Enemy*. In the

movie, Yılmaz Güney plays a young civilian tasked with carrying important documents to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the headquarters of the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara (Figure 15).[14] In the same year, Güney starred in another Atıf Yılmaz film, *Ala Geyik* (*Red Deer*), which cemented his position as a *bona fide Yeşilçam* lead actor. Yet, his career was different than most male *Yeşilçam* stars of the time, as his acting performance, physical appearance, and eventual transition into becoming a star came with particular nuances that tested both the male protagonist archetypes and casting customs of *Yeşilçam.*

Figure 5.1: Poster of *Bu Vatanın Çocukları* (*The Children of this Nation*), the first time Yılmaz Güney starred in a movie.

The characters portrayed by Güney—through his acting, the characterization of the characters he played, and the general star-text created around his roles—brought a different sort of primary male protagonist performance to the Turkish silver screen. John Ellis (1992) defines a star as "a performer in a particular medium whose figure enters into subsidiary forms of circulation, and then feeds back into future performances" (91). A performer specific to the medium of cinema, film stars are discursively and politically packaged, market-relevant figures that have been historically supplied to the mass public

[14] As I was not able to access this movie through archives available to me, I chose not to label this movie as a Turco-Western.

and cinephiles through various ways. These could include the vertically functioning studio models of the past, various agents of the film industry (casting agencies, directors, film festivals, popular critics, etc.), public relations teams working for a star, or the star's self-presentation in the media (with interviews, select publicity acts, scrutinization of their personal lives, and personal social media usage). All of these networks combine to create affective bonds between audiences and the stars through the latter's performance, personal life, political beliefs, and the discourse that they create amongst their fans. Elaborating on the early acting career of Yılmaz Güney in the first half of the 1960s, Murat Akser (2009) claims that "popular imagination of a [male] screen hero was a different type of hero" which was a conventionally handsome or European-looking, well-educated, bourgeoise figure labeled as *jön* (stemming from *jeune* in French) representing and reflecting modernist ideals (146). Labeling and framing himself as the "ugly king" of Turkish cinema—parodying the moniker of another famous Turkish actor Ayhan Işık[15]—Güney enabled the representation of a *lumpen proletariat* figure that challenged both the physical bodies and appearances of conventional *Yeşilçam* male heroes and their ethical characterization (Akser 2009, 146; Zeynep Tül Akbal Süalp 2009, 134-135).

Güney's career established such an intervention to classical male protagonists and stars of the era vis-à-vis the star-text that was created around him through his roles, the moral compass, and ethical positioning of the characters that was brought to the silver screen by his performance, his physical appearance, and his personal background. According to John Ellis (1992), "the star's particular performance in a film is always more than the culmination of the star images in subsidiary circulation: it is a balancing act between fiction and cultism" (91). Yılmaz Güney's star image and star text enabled this sort of "cult" or "fandom" to develop as his characters offered a representation that rural and low socioeconomic moviegoers—who started to migrate from rural towns of Anatolia into urban centers or immigrate to Germany and Europe to seek a better life—can identify with. Furthermore, Güney's characters showed this type of audience that film characters from such backgrounds could also be successful in life and acquire respect and desirability (although through violent or criminal means). After all, the "star image rests

[15] Born Ayhan Işıyan, Ayhan Işık was born to a Greek family in İzmir; sharing another similarity with Yılmaz Güney, besides their monikers as "kings," in terms of their minoritarian origins.

on the paradox that the star is ordinary and extraordinary at the same time" (Ellis 1992, 93). The fact that the characters played by Güney and their physiognomy were so similar to the ordinary people in Turkey, as well as the Kurdish population, created an affective proximity with the audience, which marked his "ordinary" qualities.

On the other hand, the very things he did in the plots of the movies—action and fighting scenes involving brute force and guns and the cinematic romances he pursued with female movie stars of *Yeşilçam*—created a fantastical myth of "extraordinariness" around him as the "ugly king." The characters played by Güney—especially in films in which he had complete authorial control over performance, direction, and script—also challenged the classical moral dichotomies between "good" and "evil" that was at the center of many films in *Yeşilçam*. The characters that were written and performed by Güney helped to create famous anti-hero protagonists in *Yeşilçam*, breaking the mold of one-dimensional characterizations in Turkish cinema. Overall, portraying characters with faults and moral ambiguities and attaining a star image/text that supported this not only allowed Güney widespread popularity but also brought new and multi-vocal displays and perspectives to *Yeşilçam*.

Both local and global scholarship on Yılmaz Güney's early career is still lacking due to the inability to access one hundred films made by the actor/director/screenwriter during this era. Murat Akser (2009) believes that this restriction in access stems from two reasons: the economic reasons arising from film presentation, distribution, and preservation system in Yeşilçam that discarded old films once they were no longer profitable (since archiving them was costly), and political reasons following the 1980 *coup d'etat* that led to denaturalization of Güney (143). After the military junta took over the regime and silenced the dissenting leftist voices in Turkey, Yılmaz Güney films, both the films that he starred in and the ones that he directed and wrote, were banned, restricted, or destroyed due to poor conservation methods (Agah Özgüç qtd. in Akser 143; Bianet). Yet, his wife, Fatoş Güney, smuggled eleven of his films to France while Güney was on the run (Akser 2009, 143). According to Fatoş Güney, four films made by Güney were able to be converted first to VCD format and then to DVD by the Yılmaz Güney Foundation in France (NTV). In 2011, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with

the cooperation of the Yılmaz Güney Foundation and Fatoş Güney, restored eleven Yılmaz Güney films and archived them (NTV).

Yılmaz Güney films survive today due to his popularity in the German film market in the 1970s as the immigrant Turkish/Kurdish workers longed for Turkey in addition to desiring cultural representation from their home country to entertain them in this new land (Akser 2009, 144). The efforts of his family after Güney's death in 1984, the availability of VHS recording and formatting techniques in the 1980s, and the personal archiving efforts of diasporic or local Yılmaz Güney fans coincided with the 1992 law that lifted the bans on Güney's films, which allowed for his popular works like *Yol* (*The Road*) and *Duvar* (*The Wall*) to be viewed (Akser 2009, 144). On the whole, Çetin-Erus and Demoğlu (2022) summarize Yılmaz Güney's acting and directing career, and its affective and political economies, as the following:

> Güney started his career with acting roles in popular films where the characters were often poor or living in adverse conditions. The films depicted their individualistic struggle, usually involving criminal means…These, unlike later films, lacked an overt political stance. In contrast, Güney's Marxist political stance is very direct in his films after 1970, starting with *Umut* (1970). Class conflict and the need to join an organized struggle is predominant. Characters are politicized. The transformation of a common person living under oppressive and exploitative rule into a revolutionary character is central to the narrative in various films (738).

5.3. The Autuer Cowboy

Yılmaz Güney—as an actor, director, and screenwriter—is significant for this study also in another respect. Apart from his political filmmaking, Güney is also one of the premier filmic creatives who utilized the Western genre to create stories that translocalized the thematic ethos, spatial politics, performatic affects, and cinematic conventions of the genre unto Turkey. Contributing to Turco-Westerns either with his acting, directing, and screenwriting—and sometimes with all of them combined together—Yılmaz Güney is involved with Turco-Westerns such as *Kovboy Ali* (*Cowboy Ali*; dir. Yılmaz Atadeniz, 1966), *Seyyit Han* (dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1968), *Aç Kurtlar* (dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1968), *7 Belalılar* (*The Magnificent Seven*; dir. İrfan Atasoy, 1970), *Ağıt* (*The Elegy*; dir. Yılmaz

Güney, 1971), *Acı* (*Pain*; dir. Yılmaz Güney, 1971), and *Çirkin ve Cesur* (*The Ugly and Brave*; dir. Nazmi Özer, 1971).

Güney's first venture into directing and producing (through his own production company Güney Film) in 1966 also came with a hybrid Western that combined semiotics of Turkish Social Realist village film, romantic comedy, and Western. This film, *At, Avrat, Silah* (*Horse, Woman and Gun*), centers around two characters in the rural countryside of Turkey. The first one of them, Yusuf (Yılmaz Güney), is a kind-hearted rancher who refuses to hunt and kill animals. In the opening prologue of the movie, Yusuf, who is helping his family run their farm, is tasked by his father to find himself a partner. However, the father figure defies customs and traditions and does not want to handpick a partner for his son. Instead, he wants Yusuf to find the partner that he chooses. As his father explains, three things are necessary for a man in this hybrid Western diegesis: a gun that would make your friends and enemies envious, a horse that would outrun every other one in the region, and a woman. The rest of Yusuf's plot follows his adventures in the nearest urban center, as his romantic and sexual escapades fail due to his insistence to follow his kind-hearted code of masculinity. These failures, at times, subvert the norms of heteronormativity championed by other Yeşilçam romantic comedies and melodramas with their male leads, which align with the neoliberal understanding of heterosexual male desire.

The other central character of the movie is Alicik, played by Nebehat Çehre, a woman who grew up on a farm as a cowboy. Alicik, a derivation of the male name Ali with the suffix "-cik" to make it sound younger and cuter, from the first moment that she is introduced, effectively cross-dresses and wears costumes that present her as a tomboyish female cowboy. Some of her first on-screen performances also include actions closely associated with rugged frontiersmanship: selling animals she hunted, displaying expert marksmanship with her rifle, and collecting debts owed to her uncle's farm (Figure 16). She even goes as far as to threaten those unwilling to pay by shooting their teacups with her rifle and fighting a group of hoodlums, singlehandedly, who are reluctant to pay their debts. Yusuf eventually intervenes in this fight and helps Alicik, which sparks their romance.

Figure 5.2: Alicik (Nebehat Çehre), a Turco-Western gunslinger/cowgirl

Ultimately, the filmmakers (including Güney) consolidate Alicik into the modernist feminine roles as a partner and wife to Yusuf. The consolidation of their union is shaped not only by the heteronormative dictums of romantic comedy and modernist heterosexual relationships but also by the conventions of Western. Towards the end of the film, Yusuf, to apologize to Alicik for his sexual affair with another woman, duels a local bandit and card shark (Tuncel Kurtiz) and wins his horse back. After this straight-out-of-a-Western sequence ends, he visits Alicik on her farm and asks her to marry him, which the latter accepts after forgiving Yusuf. Yusuf's mayfly nature and frail masculinity, by the end of the movie, is ultimately reformed through what he learned from the performance of Alicik as a rugged cowgirl. The film also presents some real-life implications for its stars as well. Yılmaz Güney and Nebehat Çehre would marry a year after this movie and go on to shoot *Seyyit Han*, another Turco-Western, which delves deeper relatively more into ethnic and spatial politics of Turkey by using the Western form (Ali F. Şengül, 2013). Güney and Çehre divorced a year later after shooting *Seyyit Han*, in 1968, as Çehre filed for divorce, citing the physical abuse she suffered at the hands of Güney during their marriage.

Ali Şengül (2013) asserts that Yılmaz Güney Westerns in the 1960s "drew on social realism and bandit films" while "by the early 1970s, Güney's Westerns took a socialist

radical turn" which "involved different reference points like class antagonism, equality, and justice" (44; Note 9). While Şengül's observation is substantial for identifying the hybrid composition of Yılmaz Güney's Westerns, which is a telling microcosm of the entire Turco-Western canon, and the prevailing political ideology that shaped Güney's films alongside the messages that they diffused, it disregards certain details. The differentiation that Şengül makes, to ultimately establish eras in Güney's work in Turco-Westerns, does not reflect the discrepancies between some of the more overtly political Yılmaz Güney Westerns, like *Seyyit Han* and *Wolves*, made in the late 1960s and a film like *Ugly and Brave*, which is more of an adaptation of Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) set in an Anatolian village. While Güney did not direct *The Ugly and Brave*, he is listed as the co-screenwriter of the movie, which makes him part of the creative unit responsible for the textual story that the film tells and the meanings that it broadcasts to audiences. Of course, it is possible that *The Ugly and Brave* was an aberration in Yılmaz Güney's career, perhaps a means for him to fix his finances, support making movies through his production company, and sustain his star-image in Turkish cinema. While these financial, authorial, and discursive reasons may have influenced Güney's role in the movie both as its star and screenwriter, the political barrenness of *The Ugly and Brave* or its adherence to escapist and entertaining aspects of cinema complicates Şengül's historicization.

A retrospective look into the Turco-Westerns that Güney contributed to—whether as a star, screenwriter, or director—reveals that each of his films builds on each other in terms of their political charge. *Cowboy Ali*, the first Turco-Western that Güney starred in and, unsurprisingly, co-wrote, is based around societal abjection. In the film, the titular cowboy, Ali, an ex-convict, bases his personality and sociality on Western movies he watched as a kid. After being convinced by his old cellmate to trick a family into thinking that he is their long-lost son, Ali becomes part of a conventional patriarchal family structure again, only for him to be jettisoned out of this structure by the end of the movie. *Wolves*, a revenge Western, is also based primarily on societal abjection and the impossibility of the cowboy gunslinger figure to be a part of a policed modern society. Turco-Westerns that Güney either made or contributed to are strongly loaded with his political character and star-text. Nevertheless, as the rest of this chapter will argue, they

are also products of a certain era and a certain type of genre filmmaking. *Wolves* is an amalgamation of all these factors, and—in terms of its translocalization of the snow Western subgenre into Turkey, action choreography and cinematography, and political critiques—is a substantial example of Yılmaz Güney's body of work in the Turco-Western canon.

5.4. A Political Turco-Western: *The Hungry Wolves*

Wolves is a revenge Western depicting the snowy Eastern Anatolian provinces of Turkey. John Cawelti (1984), in his work *The Six-Gun Mystique*, identifies seven types of plots that Westerns generally follow. In what the scholar calls the "revenge plot," the protagonist seeks revenge against either the outlaws or Native Americans that wronged them and go against the civilized and pacifist nature of their community (74). *Wolves* follows a similar model, but the movie ultimately conforms to the aesthetic, cinematographic, and narrative economies of a "revisionist Western."

According to James Kendrick (2019), the Western's "popularity was eroding by the end of the 1960s, largely under the accumulated weight of cultural and political change that rendered its most cherished themes, including uncompromised individuality, strong masculinity, and a unique code of violence and restraint, increasingly outdated" (36). The diminishing nature of the traditional Western's popularity, alongside the popularity of Italo-Spanish Spaghetti Westerns, prompted filmmakers to revise the genre to reflect the increasing violence and injustices in American culture (Kendrick 2019, 37). *Wolves* is another revisionist Western that updates the norms and characteristics of classical representations to capture the darker and violent facades of reality with a protagonist that is a morally ambiguous anti-hero that never integrates back into society since the community he defends is already full of ethical and moral flaws.

Wolves was shot in the Muş province of Turkey, which is similarly located in the Eastern Anatolia region. The province of Muş was home to a significant Armenian population before their forced expulsion and genocide during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire. Today, the region is mostly inhabited by a Kurdish majority alongside Turks, Zaza,

Caucasians, and others. According to the collected anthology *The BFI Companion to Crime* (1997), the film was shot while Yılmaz Güney was conducting his mandatory military service (26). *Wolves* tells the tale of local Eastern Anatolian villagers who are terrorized by vicious outlaws and their gangs who inhabit this region. After Reşat, the chief of the village, is killed by the hands of one of these outlaws named Mustafa Erenler (Bilal İnci) in the film's epilogue, Reşat's son Ömer (Osman Oymak) puts individual bounties on all the outlaw chiefs operating in the region, citing that he stopped trusting the state and their frontier security forces: the gendarme. A word taken from French, which, both as a nation and a cultural body, was positioned as the primary Western source to emulate by the founding Turkish government elites until the 1950s, these type of security forces function as the police division of the military and generally operate in rural areas to keep order. *Wolves* depicts a story in which these gendarme forces fail to fulfill their jobs since outlaws roam free and terrorize villages and their inhabitants by extorting their money, goods, and abducting them either for ransom or sexual molestation.

The inciting action of the movie takes place when a stranger, one of the passengers riding a bus into the region, kills one of these bandits terrorizing the region: Musa (İhsan Gedik) and his crew. Introducing the Western protagonist into a frontier town that is out of balance, this event sets up the rest of *Wolves'* narrative to follow. However, *Wolves'* story is not a classical Western narrative but a revisionist one in which the main hero is a flawed, self-centered anti-hero. This is signified in the first seconds that the audiences meet this character. The shocked passengers, who were forced out of the bus earlier by Musa and his stickup men, peak at the bus to meet their savior. The camera follows their curious collective gaze and cuts to reveal Yılmaz Güney's face, who is trying to wake up by getting under the blankets he wrapped himself under. This stranger character, who will remain unnamed until the last ten minutes of the movie, looks at his fellow passengers with his gun aimed at them and gestures with his hand for money in exchange for their lives: threatening to kill them and asking for compensation for his services in saving them (Figure 17).

Correlating people's life with money, whether for bounty or ransom, is a key transactional exchange in Westerns. This also remains a running theme throughout *Wolves* as villagers

are taken hostage by outlaws and criminals are exterminated for money. In fact, in another Western starring and written by Yılmaz Güney, *Cowboy Ali*, people's lives are equated with the cost of bullets. Solidifying *Wolves'* genre allegiance to the Western, this transactional phenomenon also marks this space as a snow-bound Wild West that is not ruled by the dictums, laws, and regulations of a modern state but by rugged individuals who dispense violence in an uncontrolled manner. After killing Musa and his bandits, the stranger character approaches a teahouse, which serves almost as a translocalized saloon in this snow-bound Eastern frontier. Inside, the staff of the teahouse and customers are discussing their morbid lives faced with criminal activity and reading about the latest bounty put on these bandits by Ömer. As a communal spot, this teahouse also serves as an apparatus for political propaganda as its walls are adorned with actual political party posters of the era and their promises to the broader Turkish polity. One of these posters belongs to the founding party of Turkey, the Republican People's Party (CHP).

Figure 5.3: The unnamed gunslinger (Yılmaz Güney) gesturing for money after saving his fellow passengers

After existing as the single ruling party until 1945, CHP experienced successive failures at polls following the 1950 elections, which saw Adnan Menderes's Democrat Party come into power. After briefly forming coalition governments following the 1960 coup d'etat

in which Menderes and other politicians were executed, and DP was disbanded, CHP faced another defeat as well, as the right-wing Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) was able to gain enough votes to form a government on their own. In the face of these defeats, CHP promised a new political direction with the slogan "middle of the left," which is also present on this poster in *Wolves* (Figure 16). This slogan was picked to appeal to both nationalist and socialist-leaning voters, practiced first under the leadership of İsmet İnönü (1884-1973)—the former prime minister, president, and War of Independence general—and then under the Turkish journalist, politician, and later prime minister Bülent Ecevit (1925-2006).

Another one of these posters featured on the walls of this teahouse belongs to the Trust Party (*Güven Partisi*), a right-wing, anti-communist, conservative Kemalist party founded by the politicians who left CHP in 1967. These posters ultimately play an important symbolic role in the movie as they decorate the background in medium close-ups each time the unnamed gunslinger returns to the teahouse to cross off the names of the targets he killed and deliver their detached heads. Moreover, this bounty list hangs on top of the CHP poster, which is an iconic signification that connects these criminals intimately with the foundational party of Turkey upholding the founding Kemalist ideologies of the state (Figure 18). During the last years of the Ottoman Empire and in the War of Independence, *çete* (bandit) units worked to evict minority groups and extort their wealth, quench any sort of dissident ethnic voices, eliminate ethnic minorities who did not support the National resistance and its vision during the Turkish War of Independance (Ryan Gingeras 2014, 37-39). While there is a high chance that this mise-en-scène is just coincidental, this sort of arrangement brings the criminal injustices and gang activity perpetrated by powers that were in control of the Turkish state since the late 19th century onto the surface as well as pointing to the state-led violence perpetrated in the Eastern parts of Turkey, such as the Dersim Massacre of 1938 targeting Kurds.

In the only extended analysis of the movie, Gökay Gelgeç (2013) also notes the importance of these posters for the movie's overt political criticism, associating Trust Party's agenda of fighting communism with "faith" with Ömer, the son of the slain village

chief who funds the bounties on these criminals' head Likely referring to how Ömer hands a gun to his wife to kill herself after she was raped by Kara Aziz's (Hayati Hamzaoğlu)

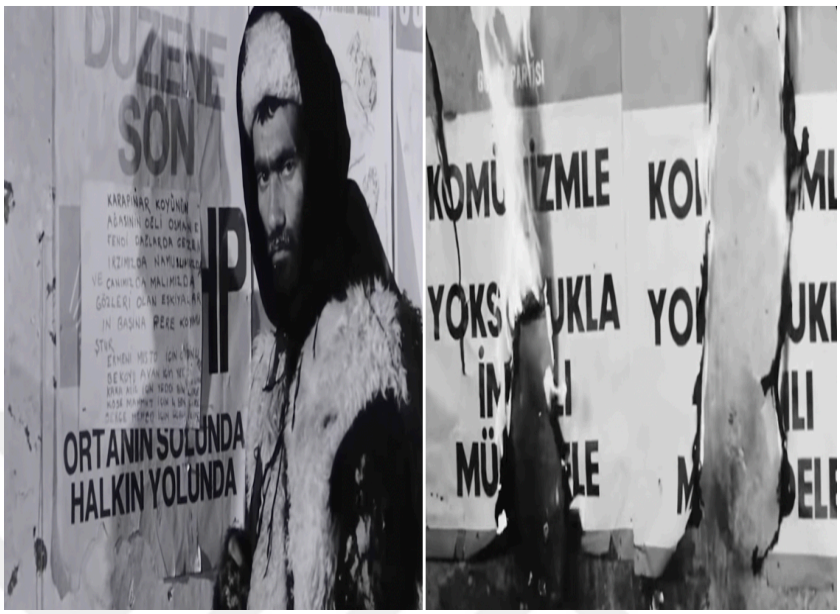

Figure 5.4: Political party posters of the People's Republican Party (CHP) and Trust Party (GP) in the teahouse. The blocking of the unnamed gunslinder in front of the CHP poster that reads "*Düzene Son*" (An End to the System) foreshadows the role he will play in the rest of the movie. At the same time, the screengrab from the right depicts the Turkish state's anti-communist and socialist proclivities.

men, Gelgeç observes how the religious moralist traditions of Islam, which Ömer supports by putting up posters in his teahouse, contrast with the bounty he put on these criminals which basically invite people to kill. This interpretation is also supported by the set design in which bandits invade Ömer's home and molest his wife off-screen. After the sexual assault, a physically and mentally beaten Ömer slowly opens the door that leads to his bedroom. Finding his wife traumatized and crying due to the sexual violation she suffered, Ömer, after a brief moment of silence, throws her a gun to commit suicide since his honor is defiled. This exchange, Ömer giving the gun to his wife, is captured in a low-angle medium close-up which reveals a big Arabic calligraphy from an Islamic prayer hanging on top of the door frame, right on top of Ömer (Figure 19). In the long run, this choice in set design, which gives information about Ömer's political allegiance, critiques how women are treated in this freezing frontier: paralleling women with personal goods that can be discarded as soon as they are deemed abjects by the standards of conservative patriarchal traditions.

Figure 5.5: Ömer (Osman Oymak) handing his wife a gun to kill herself.

In the film's final scene, the gendarme forces surround the teahouse to kill the unnamed gunslinger, who is revealed to be the fugitive Serçe Mehmed, the last name on the bounty list that also commands the cheapest bounty with three-thousand lira. After Memed manages to shoot various make-shift Molotov cocktails that the gendarme forces throw inside the teahouse, which is a particular choice as Molotov cocktails are famously employed by leftist protestors or agitators due to their easy production and cheap cost, these posters, alongside Memed, burn in flames. The penultimate shot of the film shows the Trust Party's poster and their promise to "fight communism and poverty through faith" burn as well. This connotes, at least in my interpretation of *Wolves'* political subtext, the suffering that communist and radical leftist groups, which have historically found a significant number of Kurdish supporters, have suffered by the law enforcement forces and the police of the Turkish state (Mesut Yeğen, 2016). Furthermore, by also engulfing Yılmaz Güney within flames, a star figure who is a known leftist and Kurd, the movie connects this political ideology with a celebrity name and foresightedly challenges the right-wing political hegemony by utilizing the metaphor of flames and its symbolic charge: militaristic resistance through fury and destruction.

As Richard Dyer (1998) states, a star figure is a "structured polysemy, that is, the finite multiplicity of meanings and affects they embody" (3). Similarly, Robert C. Allen (1999) also writes that stars represent "complex images containing multiple meanings" (54). I ultimately claim that the metaphorical signification of this scene and its particular cinematic portrayal by Yılmaz Güney, a symbol both as an auteur director and a star, is foresighted because of how it portends the clashes between the Turkish state and its Kurdish people. These clashes have found form in historic altercations between Turkish military forces and the members of the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) that continue to take place today. The filmmakers mediate this, and perhaps predict the future, by filmically setting Yılmaz Güney, the star figure, ablaze. With this exegesis, I am suggesting that the creative unit behind *Wolves* (not only Güney as its sole auteur director) predicted that the continued injustices and oppression that the Kurdish population faced in Turkey would result in armed resistance and perpetrate its own militarism and violence as well: invoking the metaphor of a fire that spreads, just like the fires that envelop the teahouse where Memed makes his last stand.

The posters in this teahouse and their cinematic employment from a symbolic art/set design standpoint not only make political allusions to the Kurdish suffering and armed resistance/militarism in Turkey. The bounty poster placed on top of the CHP poster instantiates other minority groups in Turkey and their "national abjection" as well (Figure 20). With her term "national abjection," Karen Shimakawa (2002) posits an update on the Kristevan formulation of "abjection," arguing that the paradigm of abjection can also be inferred "as a national/cultural identity-forming process" which "occup[ies] the seemingly contradictory, yet functionally essential, the position of constituent element and [its] radical other" (3). Although the names that these figures are referred to in the film are different, the bounty list refers to Mustafa Erenler (Bilal İnci) as "Ermeni Musto" (Armenian Musto) and Beko Avni (Sırrı Elitaş) as "Bekoyu Avan," which is a Kurdish name (Figure 20).

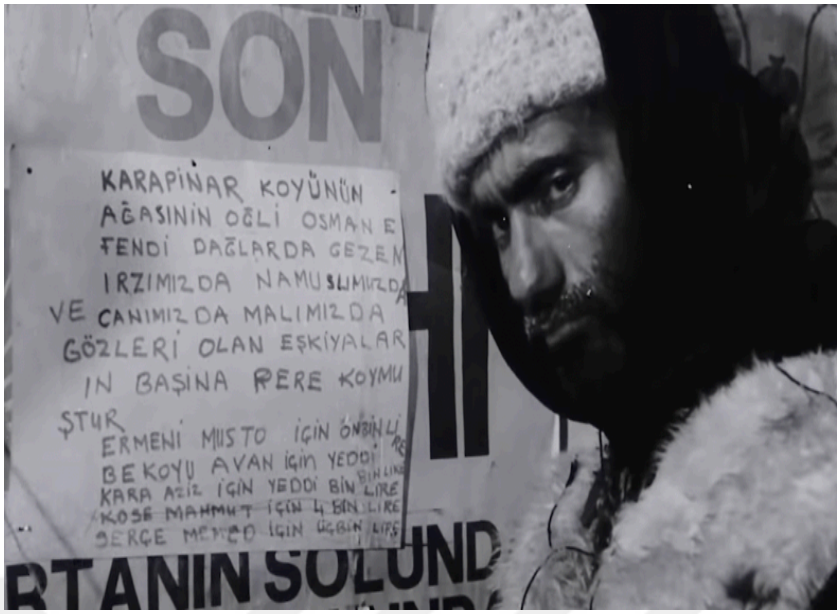

Figure 5.6: A close-up of the bounty list that archives the original names intended for the characters in the movie.

Quite possibly an oversight that could not be fixed with post-production, or one of the elements that remained in the movie after its revision by the censor committee, the ethnic orientation of these characters and their association with criminal activity caricatures these ethnic minorities as villainous and evil. By vilifying these characters along the lines of antagonists from Westerns, the filmmakers behind *Wolves* intend to demonstrate the depths of national abjection which minorities suffered in Turkey—forcing them into armed criminal activities and turning them into the very evil described by the nationalist state discourse. Just like with its allegorical prognostication of PKK, *Wolves*, with its Jamesonian "political unconscious," also anticipates the activities of ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia) in the latter half of the 1970s with Mustafa Erenler/Ermeni Musto and his crew. Of course, one may rightfully challenge my interpretations as what Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus (2009) call "symptomatic reading:" the analytical overreading of the latent meanings and content behind texts that are associated most closely with schools such as psychoanalytical film theory (3). Yet, the previously discussed political subtext of *Wolves*, and the film's long-time ban in Turkey until its recent restoration and circulation starting in 2011, suggests that the film was restricted and prevented from being shown to the wider public for specific reasons. While my speculative grounds may not be what informed the censor body's collective

decision to prohibit the movie, the movie contains a significant political surface and subtext that warrants unearthing these potentialities too.

The name of the film, *The Hungry Wolves*, with the emphasis on the animal wolf, can also be interpreted as a gesture critiquing conservative nationalists. According to Turkish myths, or rather a reinterpretation of these myths by Ziya Gökalp ([1923] 1968), Asena was a she-wolf that helped Turkish people gain sovereignty and form their independent states in Central Asia. According to Hacer Gülşen (2013), the wolf symbol was utilized by early nationalist journals and even found representation on top of newly minted Turkish paper money (6). The middle of the 1960s saw the growing rise of nationalism, especially among youth movements in Turkey, which led to parties like the Republican Rural National Party (CKMP). Eventually evolving into the National Movement Party (MHP), which is one leg of the ruling coalition in power today, these parties were supported by their very active, vocal, and violent youth groups that called themselves "Grey Wolves" after the myth of Asena. Additionally, this group was also influenced by the promulgation of nationalism vis-à-vis how this mythic creature was revised in the works of ultra-nationalist author Hüseyin Nihal Atsız. Acting like gangs, these nationalist youth groups, alongside socialist groups, led to violent altercations in major cities around Turkey, which eventually led to the 1980 military *coup*. Released in the same year that MHP was founded, *Wolves*, with its name and the savage/animalistic individuals it depicts, is also an overt criticism of the Grey Wolves movement and its ultra-nationalistic ideologies.

Finally, *Wolves* also exposes inherent misogyny and gendered injustices that have taken place in Turkish history, especially in less controlled and policed frontier and rural regions. Women, throughout *Wolves*, are subjected to sexual assaults and abandoned by their partners after their "defilement" according to the codes of Islamic moralist dictums. This theme, as it turns out, is at the center of *Wolves'* story and the mission of its protagonist, Memed. As Memed later reveals to the unnamed teacher character (Enver Güney), whose wife he rescues from some bandits that are not listed on the bounty poster, eight years ago, he had been a newlywed teacher assigned to a village in the Siirt province of Turkey which is also located in Turkey's Eastern region. One day, the town in which

Memed was teaching was raided by bandits who abducted his wife. Nine months later, the bandits returned her corpse and told him she had committed suicide. This extradiegetic backstory sets Memed's vengeance quest in motion and Turkifies the revenge story typology that Cawelti identifies to comment on and reflect gendered injustices that take place in Turkey.

The audience is meant to understand that Memed's wife committed suicide due to the constant physical and sexual assault she suffered at the hands of these bandits, as the teacher's wife (Sevgi Can) also tells Memed after her rescue that she contemplated suicide due to the shame and social ostracization of being defiled (through rape). This backstory made Memed realize the infinite nature of feelings like "love, pain and anger," which made him go on his revenge quest to terminate all the bandits he came across for the last eight years, causing him to become a wanted criminal with a "shoot-on-sight" order. Having failed once to convince the teacher to accept his wife back earlier in the movie, Memed, moved by his talk with Ömer in which the latter shares his agony over forcing his wife to commit suicide, revisits the teacher and claims that ideal "manhood" is not rejecting and abandoning your partner over broken codes of honor and tradition but by dismantling those systems by loving and taking care of your partner no matter the circumstances and help them recover. One part why Memed goes back to convince the teacher is also to pay the debt he owes to the teacher's wife for rescuing him earlier in the movie after he was shot. While taking a stance against the dogmas of religious and patriarchal conservativism and its paradoxical possessiveness and disregard for women, Memed also commits an act just after this sequence that shatters the philosophy he establishes in this sequence.

Unable to find and kill Kara Aziz after infiltrating his hideout, Memed forces the bandit's wife, Zehra (Türkan Agrali), to follow him in order to lure Kara Aziz. While the movie does not make why Zehra follows Memed clear, the former follows Memed anyway through the snowy mountains as long shots establish how Mehmed walks in front and has no way to stop Zehra if she runs away. One reason Zehra follows Memed is perhaps due to the promise of being emancipated from the oppression she suffers at the hands of Kara Aziz. Eventually, Memed takes her into his igloo, which he constructed earlier in the

movie and used to kill Mustafa Erenler. Later, when Kara Aziz and his crew find this igloo with only Zehra inside, the bandit chief asks Zehra whether Memed did anything to her—implying whether she was sexually assaulted or raped. Zehra breaks down and falls on her knees due to both the physical and mental trauma she suffered. In addition, Zehra also realizes fate that awaits her: death. This fully acknowledges that Memed did indeed sexually molest Zehra or had some sort of non-consensual form of sex with her, resulting in this innocent woman's execution by Aziz. Memed, Memed, despite his earlier position on the nature of "manhood," orchestrates Zehra's murder, fully knowing the fate that awaited her, simply using her as bait to lure Kara Aziz and fulfill his vengeance quest as well as his sexual needs

While the film depicts the suffering and oppression that women, particularly rural women living in the relatively unpoliced frontiers, in Turkey go through vis-à-vis traditions and critiques this misogyny and injustice, it falls short of giving women any agency or cinematic representation depicting resistance to such an order. Even the plot involving the teacher and his wife is left open-ended and culminates on a depressive note as the sorrowful instrumental *saz* (a string instrument popular in the Middle East) music accompanies the teacher's wife crouching down in the snow to wait for the decision of her husband. By giving these women a hypocrite defender in Memed, the filmmakers are perhaps trying to deliver a message that gender inequality, injustice, and violence perpetrated on these female bodies cannot be defended or stopped by the same cis-heterosexual male socialities that commit these crimes. Even if this cautionary and speculative interpretation of the movie may have some validity, it still does not alter the representations created in the movie and how they promulgate further this order of violence and misogyny. Neither does it change the fact that the filmmakers behind *Wolves* chose not to utilize any fantasy mechanism belonging to film form to portray a better future, or a hope for one, for Turkish women. Those fantasies—the filmic alteration or enhancement of reality captured through the camera apparatus through cinematography, narrative, mise-en-scène, special effects, and performance—are reserved for meeting another agenda of the movie: its action-oriented aesthetics that connect the film deeper with the Western genre.

5.5. Aesthetics and Intertextual Politics of *Wolves*

The aspect that connects *Wolves* most with the Western genre—alongside its narrative, characters, decors, mise-en-scène, and props—is its action-category aesthetics. Yvonne Tasker surveys how the term "action" became a discursively agreed upon genre category in the 1980s (qtd in. James Kendrick, 36). However, action and adventure modes, in terms of how they affect audiences by elevating the visceral accomplishments and bodily movements of the central filmic figures of identification (protagonist, deuteragonist, antagonist, etc.)—as well as implicating their narrative fate by displaying them in risky or life-threatening situations—have always been part of cinema (Yvonne Tasker 2015, 25-41). Tracing the roots of this "umbrella category" within popular golden age Hollywood film types and genres, Steve Neale specifies that:

> With its immediate roots in nineteenth-century melodrama and in a principle strand of popular fiction, action-adventure has always encompassed an array of genres and sub-types: Westerns, swashbucklers, war films, disaster films, space operas, epics, safari films, jungle films, and so on (qtd. in Tasker 2015, 55).

Making a similar observation, Kendrick (2019) also lists the action-packed, violent, and adventurous elements of these golden-age genres, which "all had in common some form of violent action and an adventurous hero" (36). Westerns, as noted by these scholars, have historically displayed action-oriented aesthetics and visuals to support their overall structure both in its classical iterations in studio-era Hollywood and its revisionist formulations either produced locally in the U.S. or internationally. Revised genre formulations focus on action-oriented aesthetics and narratives to comment on violence in society and align with audience and industry preferences for action and adventure films. This aligns with Hollywood's shift towards action and adventure films as spectacles. The revisionist genre formulations also reflect the popularity of Hollywood's turn into "action" and "adventure" as aesthetic and narrative "spectacle[s]" (Tasker, 2015; Kendrick, 2019).

Wolves, with many of its action sequences involving shoot-outs, aims similarly to meet this demand. Building up on Yılmaz Güney's action fame in the gangster movies of the 1960s featuring similar shoot-out scenes, *Wolves* puts his gunslinger protagonist in

situations where he goes up against multiple foes and dispatches them with ease. Some of these action sequences, like the one in which Memed is tasked to deliver the ransom money to Beko Avni/Bekoyu Avan, are very brief as Memed dispatches bandits surrounding him in a manner of seconds. An example of what Nezih Erdoğan (1998) identifies as the "unintentional Brechtian alienation effect" of *Yeşilçam* cinema in which Turkish movies, due to financial and technical insufficiencies, can only offer an imagined facsimile of a cinematic scene or prop rather than offering filmic verisimilitude of real-life (266). This scene plays on the inherent fantastical and mythic conducts of action heroes as well as building the legend of Memed as a very capable and unmatched gunslinger. However, some of these action set pieces, like the igloo shoot-out between Mustafa Erenler/Ermeni Musto and his crew and Mehmed, and the extended sequence in which Memed kills Kara Aziz and his gang by digging tunnels under the snow and slowly assassinating them one by one are very authentic and cinematographically dynamic action tableaus that utilize the translocalized space of the Wild West into the snowy mountains of Eastern Anatolia (Figure 21).

These action sequences also contribute to the intertextual politics of *Wolves*. In the second action set-piece of the movie, Memed infiltrates the hideout of an unnamed group of bandits and dispatches all of them in the tight corridors of this hideout, eventually finding the abducted teacher's wife after he murders all these bandits. This ensuing battle, which establishes a mythos around Memed as a reaper figure who kills everything that crosses his path, is dramatically signaled to the viewers as the bandits inside see Memed's silhouette through the windows on top of the main doorway into the hideout. While the entire film openly plagiarizes Ennio Morricone's soundtracks from Leone's *Dollar* trilogy like "Ecstasy of Gold" and "Il Triello" to contribute to this mythos of Memed as a gunslinger, scenes like this also work as an homage to Leone and Italo-Spanish Western movie canon, displaying Güney's reflexes as a "global auteur" (Seung-Hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski, 2016; Figure 22). This scene also features the only moment of comedy in the film, as a duck scares Memed and the character holds his heart and smiles for the first and last time in the film. This moment of comedy and suspense is also the only time Memed misses a target in the film.

Figure 5.7: Memed's igloo (on the left) and how he kills Mustafa Erenler/Ermeni Musto (Bilal İnci; top right). Using a filter to mimic the sight of a binocular (top right) and framing Yılmaz Güney in such a way that he appears to be digging a snow tunnel (bottom right), *Wolves* also showcases the rich aesthetic and cinematographic potentialities of Yeşilçam cinema as well.

Figure 5.8: Ghostly figure of Memed stalking his prey.

Both the credits and the official movie script of *Wolves* credit the original story to author Haydar Turan. The general intertextual politics followed by the creative team behind *Wolves*, as noted by Gökay Gelgeç, also mostly pay an homage to the popular Spaghetti Westerns of the time like the previously mentioned *Dollars* trilogy and Sergio Corbucci's

similar ‘snow Western’ in *Great Silence* (1968). Despite its plagiarized soundtrack, *Wolves* is merely an homage, at best, to Spaghetti Westerns. Overall, with its original action set-pieces, translocalized narrative, and mise-en-scène, it is an authentic Western and one of the high points—in terms of its political critique, action compositions, and cinematography—of the Turco-Western genre.

6. CONCLUSION: TURCO-WESTERN SUNSETS

Turco-Westerns, by and large, came in two different forms. In one branch of this subgenre, filmmakers mobilized the narratives, iconography, and aesthetics (both in terms of cinematography and sound) of various Western genre films and intellectual properties and applied it to Turkey as a cultural and geographical space to synthesize the telos of the genre with Turkey-ish elements. In the other branch, filmmakers adapted or pastiched Hollywood Westerns or Spaghetti Westerns without applying such features of translocalization, instead making Westerns diegetically set in North America (either in the Southwest of the U.S. or Mexico) featuring classical subjects of the Wild West. Sometimes, as in the case of *Çeko* (dir. Çetin İnanç, 1970), the protagonist of the movie would have a name that links them with Turkey, yet they continue to identify as a subject of the Wild West, in this case, a Mexican.

Most Turco-Westerns, ones that were not covered extensively in this thesis, were made after 1967 as a genre-cycle following the global popularity of Euro-Westerns, particularly Italo-Spanish Spaghetti Westerns. Nevertheless, this popularity was mainly a motivator for studios, producers, and filmmakers to make Westerns with Turkish actors. The clear re-makes of Spaghetti-Westerns such as *Bir Çuval Para (A Bag of Money*; dir. Yücel Uçanoğlu, 1970), *Çeko, Çeko Sana Allah Acısın* (*Çeko May God Pity You*; dir. Birsen Kaya, 1970), *Batıdan Gelen Adam* (*The Man from the West*; dir. Savaş Eşici, 1971), *Çirkin ve Cesur*, *Kan ve Kin* (*Blood and Vengeance*; dir. Natuk Baytan, 1972), *Belalılar Şehri* (*City of Bandits*; dir. Ahmet Sert, 1972) and many more are examples of such adaptations that directly borrowed their plotlines and iconographies from Spaghetti Westerns.

Turco-Westerns made after 1967 also took their source material from classical Westerns made in studio-era Hollywood, American radio and television series like the *Lone Ranger* (first aired in 1933 and later turned into television series, comic books, and films). In addition, they also employed international graphic novels and comic books that also came in the Western genre like the Belgian *Lucky Luke* series, and Italian *Zagor* and *Capitan*

Miki series as core texts to adapt. Turco-Westerns, with films like *Zorro Dişi Fantomaya Karşı* (*Zorro versus the She-Phantom*; dir. Feridun Kete, 1969) and *Maskeli Suvari Tom Miks'e Karşı* (*The Lone Ranger versus Capitan Miki*; dir. Kayahan Arıkan, 1969) used these source materials to create integrated story worlds of shared intellectual properties like *The Zorro* (created by Johnston McCulley), *The Phantom* (created by Lee Falk), and the previously mentioned *Capitan Miki*. These movies, which predated the current trend of superhero movies produced by Marvel/Disney and D.C. Comics/Warner Brothers, used relaxed laws on intellectual property and licensing to create films where characters from different franchises could meet and interact with each other.[16]

Turco-Westerns, especially with the genre-cycle that started in 1967, also provided an outlet to furnish *Yeşilçam* cinema with softcore pornography, erotica, and sexploitation. Discursively called "Sex Influx" in *Yeşilçam*, these years witnessed the rise of films featuring softcore sex scenes and displays of female exploitation and nudity. This movement was also supported by the promotional materials of the movies as well, as seminude figures adorned the posters of these films. Özgür Yaren (2017) also traces a similar industry-wide survival strategy in the European, primarily Italian, cinema industry in the 1970s. Called "Euro-Trash," which increased the popularity of genres like horror, Spaghetti Westerns, softcore pornography, and sexploitation films amidst the global economic crisis in the 1970s, the global turn to movies centered around sex and erotics was based on the record level of interest rates in the U.S. and the oil crisis in 1973 that led to massive inflation worldwide (Yaren 2017, 1362). These factors enabled the stagnation of Hollywood films after the production boom Hollywood experienced between 1966 and 1968 (Christie Milliken qtd. in Yaren 2017, 1363).

Additionally, with the technologies enabled by more compact modes of 16-millimeter filmmaking that could capture the private spaces where intercourse took place, pornographic films became a part of the adult sexual entertainment market (Eric Schaefer qtd. in Yaren 2017, 1363). National film industries like Germany and Sweden that saw a relaxation on filmic censor politics regarding depiction or documentary capture of sex

[16] For further exploration of these Turkish superhero storyworlds, see Ian Robert Smith. 2017. *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. Edinburgh: EUP, pp. 45-60.

followed suit in these developments and became huge exporters of pornographic films (Yaren 2017, 1363-1364). Sex also became a mainstream filmic topic with B-level sexploitation films and a booming adult film industry in the U.S. (Carmine Sarracino and Kevin M. Scott, 2008).

For Yaren (2017), the "Sex Influx" in Turkish cinema resulted from the global economic crisis in the early 1970s and local political instability, which affected Turkey's import economy and local film production, distribution, and screening business (1357-1358). The introduction of television into the larger society and its quick positioning as an "indispensable member of the household" also presented a big rival to the cinema industry as the premier audiovisual entertainment form amidst rising political volatility on the streets (1358). With the increasing prices for raw films and the rising economic inflation, as well as the ticket-price discrepancies between Turkish and foreign movies (1360), the film industry was pressured into constantly attracting audiences to view locally produced films, making the Turkish film industry turn into rising softcore pornography or sexploitation genres. As Nurgül Abisel states, "film theaters with crumbling seats, broken projectors, and defective heating systems, became spaces to satisfy the different expectations of a particular section of the audience:" the sexual and masturbatory pleasures of Turkish male audiences (qtd. in Yaren 2017, 1361; translation of Yaren).

Usually accompanying already established genres like the crime film, historical action-adventure movies, and Westerns—with most of the Turco-Westerns made after 1967 being examples of such hybridity—these sexploitation movies catered to male audiences through scantily dressed female characters or gunslingers portrayed by actors like Feri Cansel (1944-1983), Arzu Okay (1955-), Figen Han (1950-), and Gülgün Erdem (1951-) (Figure 23). The fantasy Wild West depicted in these sexploitation Turco-Westerns, which primarily took place in the American frontier as Turkish actors pretended to be gunslingers and inhabitants of the Wild West very much like *Groom*, also offered an avenue in which sex and nudity took place outside the boundaries of modernist heteronormative conservativism of the Turkish state. With that said, this thesis focuses on Turco-Westerns which translocalized Turkey unto the Western genre or *vice versa*. Most of these sexploitation Turco-Westerns did not offer such a premise. As such, they

fell out of my critical corpus as their exploration did not present avenues for me to explore filmic translocalization. Nonetheless, these sexploitation Turco-Westerns are riveting cases to pursue in the future for film scholars interested in *Yeşilçam*. Analysis of sexploitation Turco-Westerns like these could yield new insights in terms of stardom, casting, and marketing politics of foreign actors and their celebrity in Turkish cinema like Cihangir Gaffari, who has been the star of many of these sexploitation Turco-Westerns. Researching these films through formal analysis, archival, and ethnographic research can provide new insights on how female stars were objectified during the "Sex Flux" era of *Yeşilçam*, how they were perceived by the public, and how their careers were affected as most of these actors could not find work in the film industry after the "Sex Flux" era.

Figure 6.1: Posters from sexploitation Turco-Western of the era starring actors like Feri Cansel, Gülgün Erdem, and Arzu Okay. The posters overtly sexualize these actors, with *Sevimli Haydut*'s poster (*Cute Bandit*; dir. Mehmet Aslan, 1971; top-right) depicting and marketing Gülgün Erdem's imaginary body in full nudity as a selling point.

Turco-Westerns were generally B-movies that managed to generate high revenues at the box office and were reportedly fan favorites in Anatolia (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005, 10). Çetin İnanç's 1970 film *Çeko*, for instance, was one of these big box-office successes that gave actor Yılmaz Köksal (1939-2015) overnight popularity. Köksal would star in many Turco-Westerns, and the characters he played in other films would constantly wear costumes that recalled his popularity as a Western gunslinger as he became deeply

identified with Turco-Westerns. Before his death in 2015, he also made a cameo appearance in *Yahşi Batı* as a sheriff.

Turco-Westerns also enabled international co-productions channels for the Turkish film industry. The 1970 Western titled *Ölüm Fermanı* (*Death Warrant*; dir. Kemal Kan) was a Turkish-Iranian co-production that was also released in Iranian cinemas under *Se Delavar*. Another big-budget Turco-Western co-production shot in this era was *Yumurcak Küçük Kovboy* (*Yumurcak the Little* Cowboy; dir. Guido Zurli, 1973). Part of the *Yumurcak* series, a disconnected intellectual property revolving around a mischievous boy named Yumurcak, played by İlker İnanoğlu and produced by his director/producer father Türker İnanoğlu[17], this movie placed Yumurcak as a boy in the Wild West and depicted his adventures to recuperate the former gunslinger Keskin (Cüneyt Arkın). Partially shot in Cinecitta sets in Rome, *Küçük Kovboy* is by far the most expensive and well-made production in Turco-Western canon from a technical standpoint in terms of its action choreography, cinematography, and mise-en-scène (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005, 128). Produced by a Turkish filmmaker, the film also features an international cast consisting of Americans and Italians alongside an Italian director (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005, 128). While being a transnational production, the film makes no claims into the translocal politics I established with my case studies, so I had to omit a formal analysis of the film in this thesis. However, the film stands as a very inviting case study, due to its nature as a big-budget production within a subgenre and national film industry, to be explored in future research through in-depth archival and ethnographic research alongside a comprehensive formal analysis.

Amidst sexploitation Westerns, this era also witnessed critical and popular successes that hybridized with the Western genre. In addition to Yılmaz Güney's applications of the genre, a Western that "is from here [Turkey]," according to Zeynep Dadak and Berke Göl (2010), is Feyzi Tuna's (1939-) 1973 film *Kızgın Toprak* (*Scorched Earth*) (23). Combining Turkish social realist village film and revenge Western, *Kızgın Toprak* depicts

[17] Türker İnanoğlu was the director of 1967 film *Kader Bağı* (*Bonds of Destiny*), the film that started the genre-cycle of Turco-Westerns between 1967-1975. Additionally, one of the starts of the film, İlker İnanoğlu, would have a very active career mostly as a television actor in his adulthood which is an anomaly for Yeşilçam child actors whose acting careers often expired after they reached adulthood.

the lives of a rural farmer couple in Southeast Anatolia, Şirvan (Tamer Yiğit) and Sultan (Fatma Girik). Şirvan burns all the crops belonging to the local landowner Çello (Hayati Hamzaoğlu) after the latter takes over his lands and performs a hostile takeover of his shawl production business. After this, he is caught by the gendarme and thrown into jail. When he is released from prison and returns home, he sees his wife, Sultan, on the verge of suicide due to the sexual molestation she suffered at the hands of Çello's thugs. After this point, the movie's narrative action follows Şirvan's desire for revenge due to the things done to her wife and to restore his honor.

Despite their popularity and established nature as a genre through repeat performance from actors like Cihangir Gaffari, Tamer Yiğit, and Yılmaz Güney, the Turkish film industry ceased to invest in Western genre films after 1975 until Ömer Faruk Sorak and Cem Yılmaz's 2009 film *Yahşi Batı*. Even this contemporary comedy Western, enabled by the creative star-text of perhaps the most popular Turkish celebrities, was not followed by similar ventures into the genre by Turkish production companies and filmmakers. Hasan Karcı's 2017 film *Belalılar* (*Alborotadores*), which was shot as a part of the 2017 Almería Western Film Festival, stands as an outlier to that. Yet, as a festival film made with very limited equipment and budget, it hardly reflects the instincts of mainstream filmmaking in contemporary Turkey. On the other hand, *Yahşi Batı* remains one of Cem Yılmaz's, who is a perennial box-office money-maker, least successful films in terms of its eventual box-office outcome, displaying the further disinterest of the general moviegoing public in Turkey to consume Turco-Westerns today. Despite this, if one wakes up early on weekends, one can easily catch a selection of Westerns airing over TRT 2, the arts and culture substation of Turkish Radio and Broadcasting Corporation. Dubbed Turkish and called *Western Kuşağı* (Western slot), this airing slot developed into a tradition of its own amongst a specific demographic in Turkey: the elderly male population (Figure 24). While still relevant in platforms and T.V. channels like these, Turco-Westerns, by no means, played a significant role in Turkish film or audiovisual culture after 1975.

Although starting with a military memorandum that threatened the country with a coup, economic crises and constant devaluation of Turkish money, an armed intervention

Figure 6.2: A tweet from TRT 2's official Twitter account notifying its followers about the return of the "Sunday classic" Westerns after their removal from TRT 2's programming following the 2019 S-4000 missile purchase crisis between Turkey, Russia, and the U.S.

into Cyprus which positioned Turkey against its NATO allies, failed coalition governments that led to prime minister Bülent Ecevit and his whole cabinet resign twice in 1974 and 1979, the 1970s was one of the most productive decades of Turkish cinema history (Dadak and Göl 2010, 12; Ürün Yıldıran Önk 2011, 3870). As per Dadak and Göl (2010), the 1970s was an era in which the Turkish cinema industry was able to offer a variegated picture with multiple popular genres like action-crime movies, detective stories, historical action-adventure movies, arabesque melodramas, martial arts movies, romantic comedies, family comedies, and sexploitation films (32). At the same time, some filmmakers like Lütfi Akad and Metin Erksan made art-house films depicting everyday life in Turkey, while others like Yılmaz Güney used their films to critique societal injustices and challenge the state's ideology from a Marxist perspective.

Turco-Westerns were one part of the colorful—and plagiarist—filmmaking repertoire of Yeşilçam until 1975; yet, after this particular year, the Yeşilçam industry—as a collective body of producers, directors, and all sorts of filmic creatives—suddenly stopped investing and producing Westerns. One reason this trend took place was the global decline of the Western genre. Scholars like Michael Walker and James Lewis Hoberman point to the mid-1970s as the years in which Western, as a popular genre, started to decline (qtd. Pete

Falconer 2016, 262). Pete Falconer (2016) also identifies Michael Cimino's 1980 film *Heaven's Gate* and its financial disaster as a critical turning point that led to the diminution of the Western genre from popular cinematic prominence. This global trend, which Yeşilçam engaged with to draw its source materials, combined with the steady decline of movies made in Turkey after 1975 from 233 films to 136 by 1978 due to economic and political turmoils also led to the eventual death of Turco-Westerns (Ürün Yıldıran Önk 2011, 3870).

Additionally, the worsening relationships with the U.S. and NATO after the military intervention in the island of Cyprus in 1974 and the subsequent foundation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus under Turkey's custodianship may have also led to adverse societal feelings and political pressures from the Turkish Cinema Censor committee. Interventions and pressures of powerful political actors and violent groups from both the left and right-wing political spectrum may have also negatively influenced filmmakers and studios not to produce films that were, overall, so intimately connected to the U.S., its symbols and mythologies, and its politics. However, these are ultimately speculative hypotheses that need the support of in-depth archival and ethnographic research to be proven or refuted. These archival and ethnographic research dimensions are the ultimate shortcoming of this study which followed the methodology of formal filmic analysis to make sense of the aesthetic and discursive politics of Turco-Westerns in my corpus. Nevertheless, exploring Turco-Westerns, their material and political economies, as well as the reasons for their eventual disappearance from *Yeşilçam* and broader Turkish cinema through extensive archival and ethnographic research is a goal that I vigorously want to pursue in further studies.

The films in my corpus employed Western genre form and conventions to make claims about Turkey as two specific kinds of spaces: geographical and cultural. By situating the Middle and Eastern portions of Turkey, discursively called Anatolia, as a Wild West-esque frontier through cinematography and cinematic action, filmmakers behind *Enemy* and *Wolves* translocalize the Wild West frontier unto Turkey. With this sort of translocalization, they allowed for the regional and provincial consummation of filmic practices, semiotics, and generic conventions of the Western and Wild West—which, in

itself, is also an imaginary and performative space—in Asia Minor that is known as Anatolia today. In *Groom*, on the other hand, the filmmakers utilized parodic strategies, self-reflexive schemes, and the self-censoring hermeneutics of comedy to allow film characters and audiences to identify with the Wild West through cultural references coming from Turkey.

On the whole, the films in my corpus also utilize Westerns cinematographic form and aesthetics, conventions, and mise-en-scène to make political claims. The filmmakers of *Enemy* achieve this to affirm the Turkish national ontology, its founding myths, and the identification of space drawn out by the founding Kemalist elite. Moreover, Osman F. Seden and his creative crew instrumentalize the Western genre's penchant for creating historical performative to reconvey the Turkish War of Independence through a popular genre. Nowadays, a similar trend dominates mainstream Turkish televisions with historical telenovelas (shows like *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*The Magnificent Century*; 2011-2014), *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (*Resurrection: Ertuğrul*; 2014-2019), *Kuruluş*: *Osman* (*Foundation: Osman*; 2019-present) that enact similar historical performatives that fictionalize the past within a certain cinematic light for populist hegemonical agendas and ideologies. Furthermore, with the films in my corpus, filmmakers also challenged societal dogmas, such as recreational acts designated as crimes and the military coup of 1960 with *Groom*; and the historical national abjectification of the state towards minority groups and dissident political voices toward the hegemonical political ideology in *Wolves*.

It is ultimately erroneous to refer to these films as the *pinnacle* of Turco-Westerns or herald them as the only Turco-Westerns that employed such translocal strategies and ethos identified in this thesis. Yet, these films, in my critical interpretation, are the most compelling practices of filmic translocalization of the Western genre unto Turkey. Addedly, they are unique hybrid formulations for inaugurating the Turco-Western with espionage and war film (*Enemy*); offering a comedic, subversive, and hybrid articulation for the genre (*Groom*); and employing the genre alongside social realist village film to make daring political statements while conveying the popular action conventions of Western to its fullest (*Wolves*).

Over the past year, when I was asked about what the topic and focus of my thesis project is—either by my fellow cohort, in conferences by academics, or by friends who are not connected to humanities academia—most of the collective responses when I answered this question resulted in a surprise. These interlocutors, friends and acquaintances, almost uniformly reported their unfamiliarity with Western movies made in Turkey. While these interactions are an anecdotal observation at best, they suggest how the Turco-Western subgenre is now mostly forgotten. While this thesis does not conduct ethnographic inquiries, it refocuses on this specific variant of the transnational Western subgenre to discuss its narratives and cinematography, how they were employed by filmmakers to juxtapose Turkey and the American frontier as cultural spaces, and how the conventions of the wider Western genre were disseminated to make political claims or uphold hegemonic ideologies.

Discussing Spaghetti Westerns, Dimitris Eleftheriotis (2002) notes how generic conventions and mainstream narratives formulas of Hollywood have become "the international language of film" and their implementation into national filmmaking industries around the world have created parallelisms in which these films are "defined, analyzed, and judged only in relation to Hollywood cinema." (96) Eleftheriotis suggests an intervention to these comparative readings that "brings into critical attention the national and cultural specificity" of these transnational and transcultural practices of genres (96). The critical employment of translocality can at this juncture to acknowledge and trace how the unique or similar application of genres can create local specificities that highlight the dimensions that Eleftheroitis finds neglected in genre criticism and theory. This thesis may be lacking some research methodologies but it provides a starting point for further exploration of Turco-Westerns and other popular genres in the *Yeşilçam* period of Turkish cinema. Through a translocal lens, other scholars can further examine the narrative, aesthetic and adaptation politics of these genres and their national and cultural particularities.

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